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Prologue. "Hostage to Crime"; Small Crime; The Police; Solicitors; Advocates; Judges; the Jury; The Police Court—A Day on the Bench; Brixton Prison—"The House of Suspense"—and After; Wormwood Scrubbs—A "Model" Prison; Borstal—Treatment of Youthful Criminals; Life at Aylesbury Convict Prison; Dartmoor the Rugged; Dartmoor—The Farm and Quarries; At Broadmoor—"Not Able to Plead"; Prison-Breaking; Homicide—"Murder Will Out"?; "Sins of the Fathers"; The Poisoner; The Vitrol Thrower; The Burglar; The Coiner; The Forger; The Trade Swindler; The Post-Office Thief; Blackmail and Fraud; Motiveless Crime; Curiosities of Evidence; "Scenes in Court"—Some Mysteries; Wandsworth—"I am the Resurrection"—Last Scene of All; Epilogue. Futurity—"Whither Goest Thou?"

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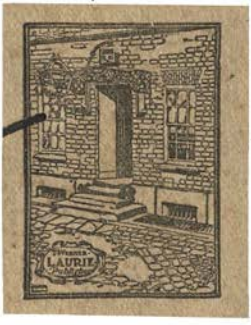
ORIENTAL CRIME

BY

H. L. ADAM

ILLUSTRATED



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I MOST CORDIALLY DEDICATE THIS
WORK TO THE VARIOUS
OFFICIALS AND EX-OFFICIALS,
INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY,
OF THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE.

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PREFACE

THE present work is an attempt to construct a record of criminology similar in form and scope to my previous work, "The Story of Crime," one being of the West, and the other of the East, forming, as it were, companion volumes. In dealing with crime in the East I was faced with manifold formidable difficulties. So widespread was the ground, so intricate and vast the subject-matter, that I was at first puzzled somewhat as to how to adequately embrace the task. I saw at a glance that a period of considerable activity was dawning for me, that in very truth I should have to "take off my coat" with a vengeance. The librarian of the India Office quietly informed me that in order to deal with crime in the East in a manner similar to that which I had adopted in dealing with crime in the West, I should first have to learn seven or eight languages,

one alone of which would take some years to acquire proficiency in. Thus I might accumulate material during my lifetime, which-subsequently could be converted into book form by my descendants—supposing I left any.

It therefore became apparent that I should have to rely largely upon others, and I straightway placed myself in communication with innumerable officials in all parts of India, in addition to also consulting those gentlemen resident in this country who had had administrative experience in the East. The results were eminently satisfactory, and I have pleasure in tendering my heartiest thanks to the following officials and ex-officials of the Indian Civil Service for the invaluable aid they have so generously rendered me: Lieut.-Colonel Sir Richard Temple, C.I.E., formerly Chief Commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Colonel Sir Herbert C. Perrott, Bt., C.B., Chief Secretary, St John Ambulance Association, who lent me the very interesting photographs showing convicts engaged in "first aid" drill at the Andamans, reproduced in this book; Sir Edmund C. Cox, Bt., Assistant

Inspector-General of Police, Bombay; Mr E. H. Man, C.I.E.; Mr Arthur T. Crawford, C.M.G.; Mr W. Crooke, Bengal Civil Service (retired); Sir C. A. White, Chief Justice, Madras; Mr E. H. Gadsden, Superintendent, Central Jail, Coimbatore, who had some photographs specially taken for me; Mr W. O. Horne, Inspector-General of Police, Madras; Lieut.-Colonel E. P. Frencharan, I.M.S., Inspector-General of Prisons, Burma, who also had photographs specially taken for me; and Mr L. E. Hurtis, Superintendent of Calicut Sub Jail. I am also indebted to Captain C. H. Buck of the Punjab Commission, for having kindly sent me some photographs of Montgomery Central Jail.

Through the kind offices of Sir Richard Temple, I was given access to the fine library of the India Office, and allowed to carry books away. I consulted many volumes, and in addition to the books mentioned in the body of this work, I have also to acknowledge my indebtedness for assistance to the following works: "The North-Western Provinces of India," W. Crooke; "The Queen's Justice," Sir Edwin Arnold; "Village Tales and Jungle

Tragedies," B. M. Croker; "Below the Surface," Major-General Fendall Currie; "Mir Abdul Ali," Naoroji M. Dumasia; "Reminiscences of an Indian Police Official," Arthur Crawford, C.M.G.; "Our Troubles in Poona and the Deccan," Arthur Crawford, C.M.G.; "The Mystics, Ascetics, and Saints of India," J. C. Oman; "Haunts and Hobbies of an Indian Official," M. Thornhill; "Prisoners Their Own Warders," J. F. A. M'Nair; "The Penal System at the Andamans," and "Round About the Andamans and Nicobars," being two lectures delivered by Sir Richard Temple before the Society of Arts. For the rest, I have laid under contribution many blue-books, pamphlets, journals, manuals, official reports, personal narratives, codes, and statistical documents. Life is life, and crime is crime, fundamentally the wide world over; thus, then, upon this common ground, and with the materials indicated, the present literary edifice has been erected. I dare not be so presumptuous as to suppose that errors, technical and otherwise, may not be discovered within its pages, but I may, though, venture to state that I have contrived, by industry and

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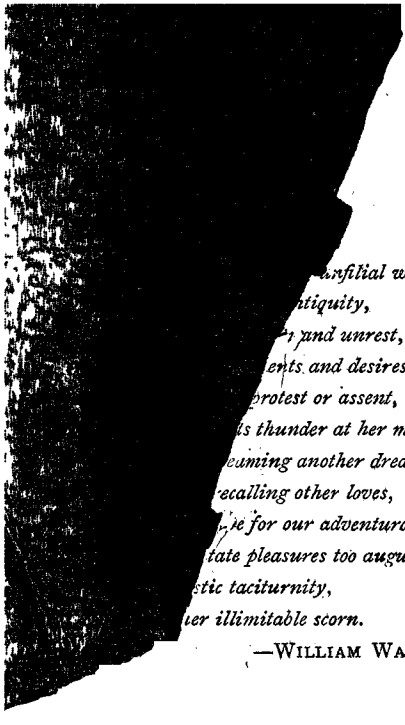
H. [illegible]



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—WILLIAM WATSON.

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ORIENTAL CRIME

PART I

THE PEOPLE AND THE POLICE

CHAPTER I

EAST AND WEST

In order to adequately appreciate, and to declare judgment upon, the constitution and administration of the police and prison systems in India, it is necessary to first acquire some general knowledge of the motley multitudes which go to the peopling of our vast Asiatic possession. Yet over this we may not tarry long ere we plunge into the main stream of the book. In reviewing the police and prison administration of this country I had to deal with people of but one kind — with a few fugitive exceptions—divided but little in their

respective theological beliefs. In undertaking a similar task in relation to corresponding institutions in India, one has to take into consideration the many creeds, innumerable castes, curious customs and superstitions, and generally retrogressive habits of mind of the native population. The management of the police and prisons of this country is mere "child's play" compared with that of the police and prisons of India.

It has been truly said that when an Englishman is put to it he can accomplish anything. In administrative ability he is second to nobody in the world, and he is head and shoulders above the majority. In the service of the State he will endure any form of privation and deprivation. Climate has no terrors for him, and what he will perform stoically upon India's coral strand he will perform with equal persistency and facility upon Greenland's icy mountains. The State calls upon him, and he answers on the voice. "Their's not to reason why," sufficient that the sacrifice is needed. Think of the renunciations endured and the administrative achievements accomplished by Englishmen in India. But a handful of them, speaking comparatively, have for many years

ruled wisely and beneficently a vast concourse of people quite alien to themselves in thought and habit. Even in their ordinary small daily customs they are antipodean to us. For instance, whatever an Englishman will do standing, a native will do sitting. We beckon by moving a finger upwards, but a native by moving his hand downwards. The noise we employ to induce a horse to accelerate its pace, the Indian uses to cause him to stop. An Englishman places an umbrella down, handle upwards, a native the reverse. We write from left to right, a Musulman from right to left; we put things on the nearest table, but natives always place them on the floor. Musulman books have leaves which turn from left to right, ours turn the reverse way. We shepherd our sheep by going behind them, the native leads his in the front. And so on.

In theological methods of thought we are, of course, as widely asunder as the poles. Mark that I have written *methods* of thought. But does this indicate any radical fundamental dissimilarity? I venture to suggest that it does not. From time immemorial it has been the custom of the West to regard with an eye of pity, tinged with contempt, the theological

beliefs and devotional practices of what it pleases to call the "poor heathen" of the East. What justification is there for this? If we look into it we shall find there is very little. In some parts of India, in pursuance of their religious beliefs, they burn their dead, in others they cast dead bodies into a "sacred" river; they make sacrifices, offerings, bow to graven images, cast themselves beneath Juggernaut, worship the sun, inflict bodily tortures upon themselves, and so on. They have curious sects, and are subject to extreme religious exaltation. There are classes and castes which stand aloof from one another.

Now let us turn to the West, from whence the tide of advancement and emancipation of thought is said to set to the East. I refer, of course, to religious thought. Just think of the variety of religious sects, some of which would appear outrageous to an Eastern mind, which are to be found in the West. The "revivals," the "Pentecostal Dancers," the "Shakers," the Quakers, the followers of the self-styled Messiah, the Salvation Army, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Nonconformists, the Dowieites, the Puseyites, the Mormons, the Kensitites, and many other 'ites and mites — all intolerant of

one another. There are, of course, the two great bodies of Roman Catholics and Protestants —intolerant of one another. Did one ever see such a religious hotch-potch? I am willing to admit that the leaders of many religious movements are merely adventurers, but the bulk of those who follow them are earnest in their beliefs. Surely the poor "heathen" who worships the sun has more reason and logic in his faith than the inexcusable idiot who dances to the fiddle of a Piggott or a Dowie!

On the subject of the hereafter every person should be allowed to think for himself or herself. Religious intolerance has caused more human bloodshed than anything else which has led to international or internecine strife. Intolerance in religious belief seems to argue unfitness to enter the kingdom of heaven. If a man cannot suffer his neighbour to think differently from himself, and must needs lay hands upon him, he proves himself to be possessed of a spirit of mischief—and misery-making which would quite unfit him for that place where no sorrow shall be known. There is only one goal, and so what matters it whether one takes the high road and another the low road, so long as they both arrive at the same destination?

Nobody has ever advanced the doctrine that there are several heavens, and that Catholics will inherit a larger measure of bliss than Protestants, and Protestants than Buddhists, and so on. The "heathen" who worships a graven image may be, doubtless is, equally as earnest and as right as the Protestant who bows to a brick wall in the Litany. In neither case is it the *material* which matters, but the *spirit.* It is simply the act of paying devotion to some invisible Power, transcending all earthly things as man transcends the mollusc. Can the most learned of Western theologians tell us more or anything of what lies beyond the grave than the "poor heathen" of the East? We are all alike, all groping blindly in the dark, with nothing to cling to but Faith. The Eastern has as much right to his form of faith as the Western has to his. There is far more earnestness and genuine devotion in the simple, unostentatious worship in the East, than in much of the ecclesiastical pomp of the West.

As he is devout and earnest in his religious life, so also is the native sometimes strenuous, steadfast, and self-sacrificing in his duty to the State. In this connection I am tempted to relate an incident which occurred quite recently,

and which demonstrates in a most impressive manner how the native in India, with comparatively few exceptions, regards the Government beneath whose rule he lives his daily life.

In the year 1903 the survey parties of the Seistan Boundary Commission were working due east of Seistan, between the Helmand and Kash Rivers, upon a desert track known as the Dasht-i-Margo. Among the exploration party was one Surveyor Sheikh Mohi-ud-Din, who was an experienced surveyor, and had won his Khan Bahadurship by frontier service of a fine order in the Survey of India Department. He was particularly anxious to penetrate into the Dasht-i-Margo, which rivals the Registan desert, further to the east, in its forbidding features. Accordingly, in spite of the extreme heat, he started on the evening of the 13th of June from Puza-i-Marhi, near Chahar Burjak, on the Helmand west of Rudbar, and struck out a course nearly due north. His party consisted of four survey *khalasis*, four Afghan guides, and two camel-men. They marched all night, and a halt was called in the early morning. They looked about, but no sign of water was to be seen. But they had four camel-*pakhals* in reserve, and so the march was continued

during the day. At nightfall a *nawar*, or shallow pool, was reached, but, alas! it was dry. By that time the water carried by the camels was exhausted. The situation was a critical one. The guides urged that either the return journey should be begun at once, or a route be taken due west so as to strike the Helmand, which makes a turn to the north below Chahar Burjak.

Mohi-ud-Din was, however, determined to push on, and a guide was sent off on a camel for water. He returned with a *mashak*-full, but it was so brackish that all who drank it fell ill and could not eat their food. The party had then to march on, and they were fortunate enough to reach another *nawar*, where a small supply of drinkable water was obtained. At midnight, on the 14th, they set off again, still steering northwards, and at daybreak they halted on a high desert-plain. There was no sign of water in any direction, and their position became a critical one, for the heat of the Dasht-i-Margo in June is intense. Mohi-ud-Din reluctantly recognised that any further attempt at exploration was impossible. His men implored him to abandon the journey and make for water while there was yet time, and he agreed to their wishes.

The party rested all day, intending to march during the night. They suffered severely from thirst, as their water was exhausted. By evening their strength was at low ebb, and two of the guides were insensible. A third guide, Sultan Mahomed, a relative of these men, tied each of them on a riding-camel, and fastened himself upon another camel. The animals were then linked together, and were left to go where their instinct should lead them.

Sultan Mahomed lapsed into unconsciousness during the night, and remembered nothing until he came to his senses through water being poured down his throat. As he recovered he learned that he was being attended to by a hunter who had entered the desert in search of wild asses. The other two guides were looked after, and they were all taken to Chakansur, the headquarters of the Afghan District of that name, on the Kash River. They arrived there almost dead, but their lives were saved by the careful administration of nourishment.

The fate of the rest of the party, with one exception, was a terrible one. After the three guides had left, Mohi-ud-Din and his seven companions found themselves too weak to march. The first to perish was a camel-man,

who wandered into the desert and never returned. The others remained all night with Mohi-ud-Din, and in the early morning, seeing that he was almost in a dying state, they crawled to a ravine near and dug for water. They sank a hole 5 or 6 feet deep, but no spring was found, their only relief being to throw the damp earth over their bodies. In the evening the four *khalasis*, leaving the guide and camel-man who could not move, struggled back to camp. There they found Mohi-ud-Din, lying dead alongside the body of his horse. Then occurred a striking example of the strong sense of duty which can actuate even a humble "follower." Saidu, *khalasi*, cut the map off the surveyor's plane-table, and wrapped it around his body in his waistcloth. He afterwards said that he was afraid to carry it in his hand, lest he should become insensible and lose it. The four men left the camp and wandered aimlessly through the night.

On the morning of the 17th they saw a high mound, and all but Saidu lay down in its shade to die. Saidu entreated his companions to make a further effort, but they were too far gone to make the attempt. He himself struggled on the whole day, and he must

apparently have become delirious, for he remembered nothing until in the darkness he stumbled suddenly into water. He quenched his thirst and then became insensible. On regaining consciousness he found himself being carried on a man's back to Chakansur. He had been discovered by some villagers, and as in the case of the three guides his life was saved with difficulty. The Afghan authorities at Chakansur sent out search-parties with water, and recovered the bodies of Mohi-ud-Din and the three *khalasis*, together with the camp kit. No trace could be found of the other three men, whose bones are doubtless bleaching in the arid wastes of deepest desert.

The bodies recovered were reverently buried at the Amiran Ziarat, a peculiarly sacred shrine, as Amiran is reported to have been a first cousin of the Prophet. In this way the Afghans testified to their respect and admiration for the men who had died doing their duty.

It is such men as Mohi-ud-Din who make the subordinate branch of the Survey Department so valuable an agency for frontier work. They set a fine example to all, and their officers know their courage, endurance, and determination in the face of the greatest difficulties. Mohi-ud-

Din was too venturesome in this instance, and he paid for it with his life and the lives of six men; but one cannot but admire him for his disregard of risks. His experience betrayed him, but he had set his heart on exploring the Dasht-i-Margo, and he could not have foreseen how suddenly he would be cut off from water. As to Saidu, *khalasi*, no servant of the State ever did his duty in simpler or more faithful fashion, and it is pleasant to know that his reward was a fitting one.

It is, then, such "heathens" as Mohi-ud-Din and Saidu that constitute the pillar of the State, and whose devotion to duty is godlike in its simple steadfastness.

CHAPTER II

THE RELIGIOUS MENDICANT

THE religious mendicant, fakir, devotee, or ascetic, as he is variously called, is a very interesting component part of the Indian population. He is peculiar to the various sects, and his characteristics and self-imposed ordeals differ according to the sect he belongs to, or the order, division, or sub-division of which he is a member. There are innumerable orders and divisions, a history or description of which would in itself form a bulky volume. We have only to regard them, upon the present occasion, in their relation to crime, and in this direction their interest will by no means diminish. Indeed, I shall later on present to the reader the accounts of some achievements of Oriental criminals, masquerading as fakirs, that for subtlety, cunning, skill, patience and perseverance, far outrivals anything of the kind to be found in the West.

Oriental Crime

Than the Asiatic mind there is no more subtle and cunning contrivance within human knowledge. This mental attribute the Oriental criminal has turned to deft account through the medium of the profound respect and deep piety in which the fakir is held by the majority of the population of India. The "holy men," whose lives seem to consist of one prolonged and wearisome pilgrimage over the face of the continent, have ever a solicitous welcome wherever they present themselves, and are the recipients of eagerly-tendered charity. They live by the wayside, as it were, with the earth for their couch, and the sky for their roof. They do not all inflict bodily tortures upon themselves, but almost without exception they practice rigorous self-abnegation. Some are filthy, almost loathsome to look upon, while others, from the eloquent expressions of prolonged and acute suffering they display, are painful to behold. The majority of them are doubtless earnest, and genuinely pious, and come somewhat near the appellation of "saints," as they are sometimes called. There are others, however, who are frauds through and through, although they may not necessarily come within the purview of the police. They play upon

the credulity of the easily duped, at whose expense they live an indolent and comparatively luxurious life.

The fakir is popularly supposed to possess Divine power, a belief, as may be imagined, which has led to some curious frauds. When the "holy man" is in what is called an ecstatic condition, he is then regarded as being moved by that spirit in which he works wonders, and confers lasting benefits. It is then he is visited by people desirous of making requests of him. He may respond to these, or he may not. He is sometimes reticent, and will not speak; the visitors may entreat him, or bully him, but he will not unseal his lips. In this connection a curious thing once happened. A native police constable hearing of the presence of a fakir in the village, went to him and questioned him, begging of him to use his influence to obtain for him, the police constable, promotion in the force. But the holy man would not speak, nor respond in any way, whereupon the policeman grew angry. His anger, however, not having the desired effect, he proceeded to employ physical force, and soundly cuffed the holy man. At last the latter spoke, but he broke silence only to revile his persecutor, whom

he hotly denounced as a *zalim*, that is to say, a tyrant or oppressor. At this the constable beat a hasty retreat in high dudgeon. A few days afterwards, however, he returned to the fakir and, doubtless, to the latter's mystification, presented himself in a very humble attitude. Doffing his turban, he cast it at the feet of the holy man—than which there could be no more profound mark of humility. The fakir looked, and wondered, and listened. The constable proceeded to thank, in fullest measure of gratitude, the devotee for having interceded for him, and informing him that since his last visit he had been raised to the position of Deputy Inspector of Police!

This was, of course, pure coincidence, and doubtless the fakir saw the point, for, with a twinkle in his eye he said: "Ah, I called thee a tyrant, and they have made thee a tyrant!"

Fakirs are not always so detached from earthly thoughts as might be imagined.

In the West fakirs are generally credited with transcendent powers in the art of legerdemain and illusion, and if they are able to perform but a tithe of those wonders which have from time to time been ascribed to them, then, indeed, must they be something more than mortal.

Opinions differ, however, upon this point, and a deal of scepticism is expressed by those who profess the art of manual dexterity and visual deception in the West. If you tell a London illusionist and conjurer that fakirs have been known to perform certain seemingly impossible tricks he will regard you with an eye of incubating pity, as much as to say: "Are you really so ignorant and silly as to believe such stuff? If a poor simple fakir could do such things I could do them also." This is, of course, not argument, but merely egotism. Many people, who have been far removed from fools, and not quite ignoramuses, have contributed positive testimony as to the incredible wonders worked by fakirs.

In the Deccan a chief once openly expressed his disbelief of goblins, and a fakir who overheard him informed him emphatically that goblins did in fact exist. The chief thereupon laughed the fakir to scorn, incidentally calling upon him to give him, the chief, ocular demonstration of his contention. The fakir accepted the challenge, and for a hundred rupees would prove to the chief that goblins existed. The offer was accepted, and the performance was arranged to take place one night in the jungle.

The chief, accompanied by several friends, duly put in an appearance, and were directed by the fakir to place themselves within a circle which they saw marked upon the ground. Outside this "magic circle" they might not move on pain of death or some other calamitous visitation. All about them was impenetrable darkness. The fakir then proceeded to murmur a kind of incantation, when at length gradually out of the mirk there appeared a number of small, quaint, bald-headed imps, dancing a fantastic polka, and carrying in their hands pieces of lighted wood. They never approached nearer to the circle than the distance of a musket-shot, and after a little suddenly disappeared.

But in spite of this nocturnal performance the chief was still sceptical, and challenged the fakir to a further demonstration. His infernal powers having been quickened with another present of a gold bracelet, he agreed to summon a second batch of *bhuts*, or goblins. The chief and his friends repaired to the same spot in the jungle and took up their positions within the confines of the "magic circle." The night was dark. The fakir repeated some spells, and soon the imps appeared as on the previous occasion, only this time they were *girl* imps,

and carried in their hands lighted *charaghs*, or terra-cotta lamps. They danced and waved their lamps, but were careful not to approach too near the circle, nor could all the blandishments employed by the chief and his friends induce them to reduce the distance between them. At length they also mingled with the shadows. Thereupon, it was said, the chief became a convert to goblinology, if I may be allowed the word.

Whatever one may think about the goblins themselves the performance was certainly curious. These devotees certainly now and again perform some miracles of endurance. In the *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, of the 23rd April, 1895, appeared the following "Extraordinary Tale of a Jogi." "The orthodox Hindus of Trevandrum," a correspondent writes to a Southern contemporary, "have lately been much excited about a *jogi* or *sanvasi* who for some time past has been literally worshipped and reverenced as a god come down to men. No one appears to know where this man came from, or to what particular race or caste he belongs; but he was supposed to be a Hindu. On his arrival he sat under a banyan tree, on the northern bank of the Padmatheertham tank,

and there he remained for three years. For the first week or so after he had taken up his arboreal residence, he partook of some milk or a plantain or two twice or three times a week. Then he gradually extended the intervals, till after three or four months he took no food at all, spoke to no one, and passed his time huddled up before a fire night and day for three long years. He looked no one in the face; he heeded no sounds, no question, nothing. The Maharajah of Travancore on one occasion stopped near the *sanvasi* and addressed him, without, however, obtaining the slightest recognition. Exposed to the cold and wet, to the heat and dust, the *sanvasi*, without partaking a morsel of food, passed his three years in divine contemplation, and, although every morning and evening numbers of people paid him homage, he appeared oblivious of all external circumstances. A few days ago he died."

Fakirs have been widely credited with the powers of transmuting metals, producing a gold coin for a silver coin, or a silver coin for a copper coin. This belief has been turned to profitable though infamous account by Oriental criminals, which I shall describe later on. Ignorance sometimes plays an important part in vest-

ing fakirs with transcendental powers. On one occasion a certain fakir called upon a druggist and herbalist, and begged him to give him some *charas* to smoke, pleading that it would cool his fevered body, which, he said, was "on fire." The druggist, however, churlishly refused, telling the holy man to go burn. The latter retorted that the fire would be upon him, the druggist, and took his leave. Soon after the druggist's shop was ablaze. The proprietor, thinking the conflagration the result of the malign influence of the derided old man, rushed off in pursuit of him. He found him in the market-place, or bazaar, and prostrating himself at his feet begged the holy man to quench the fire. He also pressed him to accept the *charas* which he had formerly refused him. The fakir was mollified, and assured the distracted man that the fire would result in benefit to him. Promising never again to refuse aid to a fakir the druggist returned to his blazing shop, entertaining a somewhat vague notion as to how the fire was to have a beneficial result for him.

The fire burnt itself out, and when the ruins had cooled the druggist made a search of the gutted premises. Among the charred remains he was at length astonished and joyed to find a

large mass of glistening silver! Thus had the fakir, thought he, returned good for evil. The explanation of the seeming miracle is as follows: The druggist had upon his premises a quantity of solder, and in the intense heat of the conflagration it had been operated on by a drug or a mixture of drugs, and so transmuted into fine silver.

The subject of transmutation of metals is one which, for many years, has exercised a great power over the Oriental mind. A young Hindu once attached himself to a fakir who hailed from the Himalayas with a view to becoming a holy man. He used to wait upon the old man, fetch and carry for him. All his purchases were, however, made with rough pieces of silver, and not with coins. Noticing that the fakir seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of such currency, the young fellow's curiosity was aroused as to how he came by it. He begged to be admitted to the secret, but his companion refused him all information, hinting that the secret was far too precious and powerful to be revealed to one so young. The novice, however, continued to live in hopes of one day being enlightened on the subject. Of one thing he was confident, namely, that the process, whatever it was, was carried

out at night. He had observed as much. As events turned out the youth was never destined to learn the secret from the fakir, for one night he committed a grave indiscretion with a woman of loose character, and in consequence was dismissed the holy presence. So scandalised was the fakir that he peremptorily ordered the youth from his hut, which he burned to the ground. Then, armed with nothing but a large pair of tongs by way of weapon, he set out alone on his journey back to the Himalayas.

The feelings of a fakir have never yet been revealed. They have been questioned on the point, but none have been able or willing to lay bare their sensations. It is a form of self-immolation born of mental exaltation, similar to that practised by the monks of the Middle Ages, who wore hair shirts next their skin, and plunged their naked bodies up to the neck in ice-cold water in the depth of winter, in order to purge themselves of carnal thoughts.

Here are some prohibitions and commandments of a tribe of ascetics known as the *Sanvasi.*

Prohibitions.

Do not sleep on a couch, under any circumstances.
Do not wear white clothes.

Do not speak to or even think about women.

Do not sleep during the daytime.

Do not at any time ride on a horse or other animal, or in any vehicle whatsoever.

Do not allow your mind to be agitated in any way.

Commandments.

Leave your abode *only* for the sake of begging necessary food.

Say your prayers every day.

Bathe every day.

Contemplate daily the likeness or image of Sîva.

Practice purity and cleanliness.

Perform the formal worship of the gods.

As the god Sîva plays an important part in the religious beliefs of the East, and among the fakirs, it may be interesting to quote some verses from Sir Alfred Lyall's "Sîva."

"I am the god of the sensuous fire
That moulds all nature in forms divine;
The symbols of death and of man's desire,
The springs of change in the world are mine;
The organs of birth and the circlet of bones,
And the light loves carved on the temple stones.

"I am the lord of delights and pain,
Of the pest that killeth, of fruitful joys;
I rule the currents of heart and vein;
A touch gives passion, a look destroys;
In the heat and cold of my lightest breath
Is the might incarnate of Lust and Death.

"And the strong swift river my shrine below,
It runs, like man, its unending course,
To the boundless sea from eternal snow;
Mine is the Fountain, and mine the Force
That spurs all nature to ceaseless strife;
And my image is Death at the gates of Life.

Thus far the religious mendicant. We must now bid him *au revoir*, to meet him again later on.

CHAPTER III

AN INDIAN VILLAGE

As we are, in this book, particularly concerned about crime and police administration in rural districts, it will not be out of place to sketch a word picture of a typical Indian village.

Imagine, then, a collection of huts, all built of mud, surmounted by thatched or tiled roofs. On the walls hang patches of cow-dung, which is being dried in order to be used as fuel. Near by is a grove of mango trees. The main thoroughfare is less a road than a rough-beaten track, formed by the constant passing to and fro of cattle — in fact, a cattle track. In dry weather it affords tolerable foothold, in the rainy season it is a quagmire. The mud with which the huts are constructed is dug from pits, which are afterwards used as refuse receptacles, unpleasant of odour in the summer, green and slimy homes of bacilli in the wet season. The sanitary arrangements are primitive when there are any at all, and the village

sweeper is assisted in his labours of "clearing the village" by pigs, jackals, vultures, and pariah dogs. The Indian peasant knows nor cares nothing about hygienics. He is a confirmed fatalist, and if typhoid or cholera seizes him he does not attribute it to the insanitary condition of his surroundings but to the Omnipotent, who will doubtless cure the disease in His own good time.

The most pretentious building in the village is the residence of the "headmān," who is the landlord of the whole village community. To him the villagers pay rent for their respective allotments of land; also dues on their various trades and appointments. The building is usually to be found in the middle of the village. It is constructed of sunburnt bricks, and has a flat roof. The latter is usually in a process of disintegration, and from out the crevices contrived by time and the elements may be seen young pipal trees growing. There is a thatched verandah, where may be seen his lordship's cane-bottomed conveyance, called a *palki*. On one side of the verandah the domestic retinue reside, doing their cooking in a mud fireplace erected against the wall of the house.

Oriental Crime

The headman of a village is the surviving representative of a very ancient judicial custom. He is at the head of what is known as the *punchayet*, that is to say, village council of greybeards. Before this tribunal are heard small disputes, petty larcenies, slanders, libels, caste quarrels of a private nature, and so on. The headman is a kind of village Solomon, a lay judge at the head of a jury of wiseacres. He arbitrates between disputants, and his decisions are invariably wise, just, merciful, equitable, and agreeable to the contending parties, who accept his judgments with resignation and faith. The law is thus administered expeditiously and inexpensively. There are no delays—it is justice "while you wait"—no court fees, no mystifying technicalities, no intriguing and peculant lawyers, no corruption. It is to be regretted that this custom is fast dying out, giving place to the more "improved" and involved methods of administering law. It is the opinion of most persons who have had any judicial experience in India that this patriarchal system is one that should be extended and expanded. The headman, from his innate knowledge of those who live under his beneficent rule, is particularly well adapted to minister wisely to

their frailties. He would succeed where a *sahib*, learned in Western law as he might be, would flounder and fail. It is also to a headman's interest to put a speedy end to internal dissension and petty strife. He is, within his boundary, the universal landlord, and while disputes are pending husbandry grows slack. The peasant is not usually fond of going to law, which he holds in anything but respect, and he has cogent reasons for his aversion. He has been extensively robbed by it from time to time.

Here is a story which most impressively demonstrates that when the myrmidons of the law once get into their clutches a man of little knowledge, some money, no wisdom, and a predilection for litigation, they will bleed him like the father of all leeches. A certain peasant, who owned a few acres of arable land, bequeathed him by his father, was, almost against his own volition, drawn into the meshes of the law. His father, in addition to bequeathing him land, also imparted to him prudent council. This was to the effect that he should never, under any circumstances, go to law. Better, said this "wise man" of the East, suffer a loss than resort to legal measures. "Once

go to law," were his words, "and you are meshed for evil all your days." Bitterly did the son confirm the wisdom of his dead parent. One day the peasant found himself embroiled in a disturbance which arose in a bazaar not far from his home. He was summoned to appear at the court as a witness for the prosecution. He gave his evidence, and in the end the prisoners were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment. The testimony he was forced to give raised bad blood among the friends of the prisoners, and after the latter were eventually released the house of the peasant was burnt to the ground. The peasant reported the matter to the police, and afterwards bitterly regretted doing so. A policeman came and lived on him for a week, and was only got rid of by means of a bribe. Then the luckless witness was summoned to headquarters, which was 30 miles off, to identify two men who had been arrested on suspicion. When he arrived he found they were not the men, that the police had blundered, but this did not save him from the animosity of the suspected men who revenged themselves on him by cutting down some of his crops, and carrying off a goat.

Then the poor distracted peasant repaired to

a court 2 miles away, having in the meantime to neglect his land, and consulted a *mukhtear* —a kind of shady solicitor—who charged him ten rupees to write out a petition, which was gibberish to the peasant, for he could neither read nor write. Then, in order to get the petition read before the magistrate, he had to "square" the clerk of the court. Eventually the matter was handed over to the police to deal with, but the officer who had it in hand could find no time to deal with it until he had been given ten rupees. Then the defendants proceeded to out-bribe the plaintiff with the police, and the latter, reduced to a penniless condition, was forced to borrow money on his crops. When his case came on he was down with fever, and it was struck out. He had it reinstated, and was able to be present in court when it was fixed for hearing. But the defendants put forward a claim for the land on which the crops had been cut, and in confirmation of it produced a title-deed. It was a forgery, but the magistrate believed it genuine, and non-suited the plaintiff. The latter, driven to his wit's end, bribed somebody to forge a deed of a later date. This was put in, the magistrate believed it genuine, and he retained

his land. All this took between two and three years, at the end of which time it is not surprising to learn that the poor peasant was sick and tired of the law, and desired no more of it for the rest of his days.

The tribunal of the *punchayet* is held either at the village well, or in the mango-grove. There is no particular mode of procedure, no law of evidence, anybody can attend and be heard. The qualifications which control the assembly are common-sense, equity, and good conscience. Simple as is the tribunal, the decisions arrived at by it are, in the opinions of competent judges, oftener right than the judgments pronounced in higher courts. Morally it is far and away superior. Bad as some of our solicitors are, and as is the *shyster* lawyer of America, the flock of legal birds of prey which hover about the various criminal courts of India are infinitely worse. They are variously named "pleaders," *amlah, vakils,* and *mukhtar-námas.* For greed, rapacity, and general unscrupulousness, they far out-pace anything of the kind to be found in the West. In addition to these there are crowds of middlemen and underlings, mostly uneducated, whose purpose it is to talk justice out of court, throw dust in the eyes of truth,

and foster litigation that can only end disastrously to the litigants. Human carrion crow, akin to the vultures which circle round the Towers of Silence in Bombay.

Immediately around the village huts is the cultivated land, known as the "arable mark"; beyond this is the grazing ground, known as the "common mark." An Indian village is self-contained, and self-dependent, and with its *punchayet* forms a perfect little community of interchangeable interests. Of course I do not mean to infer that it is idealistic, that no corruption or dishonesty ever enters therein. By no means, and, in order to make this clear, we will take a cursory glance at the various inhabitants.

First, the inevitable purveyor of gossip and small talk, the village barber, who is in India known as the *nao*. In addition to shaving the heads of the people, he also shaves their armpits. He is likewise a chiropodist, for he pares finger-nails and tittivates toe-nails. And, of course, he talks endlessly about the weather and the crops. Next the village blacksmith (*lohar*) who with his primitive implements, fashions plough-shares and the sickle, also the *khurpi*, which is used for scraping grass, and the chopper (*gandasa*)

with which chaff and fodder is cut. There is no washerwoman, but there is a washerman (*dhobi*). His "washing" is done in a peculiar manner. He collects the dirty linen of the village, deposits it on the backs of worn-out, sad-eyed ponies or donkeys, and conveys it to a pool of water which usually wants washing itself (quoth Gerard in "The Cloister and the Hearth"—"Wash you the water first, so that a man may wash his hands withal"), dips it in the pool, rubs it with soap which looks like granite, and then beats it on rough-edged stones. It is worse even than the laundry process which obtains here.

Then there is the village accountant (*patwari*), who perambulates about with a brass inkstand and a wooden box of reed pens. He is the mathematician of the village, and can always make two and two total five or three as the case may be. The village watchman (*chaukidár*) is supposed to protect the property of the villagers, and, wearing a leather belt, and carrying a club called a *lathi*, marches about the village, keeping a vigilant eye lifting in as many directions at once as possible. He is also the registrar of births and deaths. The carpenter (*barhái*) makes all kinds of things, including plough handles,

carts, wheels, doors, etc. The wood is mostly obtained from babul trees. There are shepherds, or cowherds, who look after the cattle, the potter (*kumhar*), who makes all kinds of earthen vessels; the grain parcher (*bharbhunja*); the confectioner (*halwai*), who tempts his customers with a confection known as *pansipari*, in which betel is an ingredient; the cobbler (*mochi*), who also makes skins to hold treacle, oil, and sugar; the silversmith (*sunar*), with more implements than silver; weavers (*koris*); the village servant-of-all work (*chamar*), who is also a worker in leather; and the peasant cultivators, who constitute the majority of the inhabitants.

Now all these tradesmen and officials and their callings look simple and honest enough; but they are not always what they seem. Nor are all the implements used exclusively for the purpose for which they were fashioned. For instance, the sickle made by the blacksmith is sometimes employed to cut off human noses, the grass-scraper is occasionally used to scrape a neighbour, and the chopper may have to cut human throats as well as chaff. The village accountant is sometimes also a forger, a concocter of false evidence in rent disputes, and an ardent liar. The village watchman, who is

supposed to protect the property of the villagers, may be a born thief himself, and a confederate with other watchmen in "putting up" burglaries. In his *post-mortem* statistics he exhibits a surprising mathematical agility. The cowherds sometimes manage to get their neighbours' cattle mixed up with their own, and if they are found out they are given a change of residence —also of occupation. The silversmith is not infrequently a receiver of stolen goods.

There is usually a temple in the village, as there is always a well. The village well is the great meeting-place and gossip exchange-house. It is usually to be found under a tree—banyan, tamarind, or pipal—in the centre or on the outskirts of the village. There are two kinds of wells—deep and shallow. In the case of the latter, the top consists of a large wooden drum, with a rope ladder at each end, to each rung of which is fixed an earthen pot. As the drum revolves the ladders revolve with it, carrying the pots, inverted, down with them, the latter ascending again on the other side mouth upwards and filled with water. The latter is emptied into a trough, from which it is conveyed to a small reservoir. In deep wells the water is drawn up in large leathern bags, attached to the

end of a rope, which passes over a wheel. In both cases the motive power is a couple of yoked oxen, travelling in a circle in the former instance, and down an incline in the latter.

The daily bath is taken at the well. Men, naked all but their loin cloths, pour water from brass vessels over their bodies. Women, young and old, morning and evening, bring their water-pots to fill at the well, and there exchange gossip. Once or twice a week a market is held there, the motley wares being placed on the ground. The company that gathers there is various, as also are the smells.

Sometimes in the evening, or rather about the time of sunset, the scene about a village well is very pretty, with women chatting and children playing near by. The wells, however, are the cause of a large amount of mortality. They are deep, and there is no protection round the edge. A woman in the act of drawing water, perhaps loses her balance, or her foot slips, and she falls down the well. Before she can be rescued she is drowned. It has been stated that the deaths caused in this manner far exceed those caused by snakes and wild beasts.

A well is also occasionally the scene of murders and suicides. A jump down the shaft

is a ready method of self-destruction. Children have been murdered for their ornaments, and their bodies thrown down a well. Wells are also used as meeting-places of criminals, where crimes are secretly planned. As a natural consequence they are also the meeting-places of the police, who go there in search of clues. Wells in lonely and unfrequented places, and old and disused wells, were used years ago by thugs and robbers in which to conceal the bodies of their victims, as doubtless they are occasionally at the present day.

The wants of villagers are very small. Most of the necessaries of their lives they cultivate themselves. Millet, pulse, rice, and *chapátís*—small cakes made with rough flour—form the staple articles of their diet. Altogether they live very simple, uneventful lives.

CHAPTER IV

PUNISHABLE OFFENCES

BEFORE launching into a description of the police force it will not be without interest, and it may be helpful, to briefly review the various forms of offences, in the prevention and punishment of which their services are called into activity.

We have already referred to the *punchayet*, which deals with small disputes and differences. It is the business of the watchman to report to the police all crimes and breaches of law which are dealt with before higher tribunals, a duty, indeed, which he shares with the ordinary inhabitant. All reports are supposed to be made in writing to the officer in charge of the nearest police post. A mysterious death occurring in a native's family visits upon him the duty of thus reporting it, which puts police zeal into operation. Many an occurrence of this kind, capable of a simple explanation, has through the medium of spite and vindictiveness on the one hand, and superstitious obtuseness on the other, coupled

with misdirected police activity, been developed into an apocryphal and direful "tragedy."

Everything official in India is reduced to writing, in order to build up statistics. The authorities have, in fact, got statistics on the brain, and as we learn from proverbial philosophy that statistics are capable of proving or disproving anything, it is not surprising to know that police returns in India are ofttimes quite misleading. They also commit the same grave blunder of associating promotion with convictions — "averages"—as is committed in this country. The adminstrative system which prevails in India is one of centralisation with a vengeance. Suppose the Government requires some information. The Lieutenant-Governor will first be made acquainted with the desire. He will pass it on to the Commissioner, who passes it to the district officer, who hands it to the *tehsildar*, who entrusts it to the *patwari*, who consults the *chaukidár*, who puts it into the hands of the *gorait*, who finds out. It sounds like "The House that Jack Built." The information travels back *viâ* the same route. This system has caused many an innocent man to suffer unmerited odium and prolonged privation.

Many of the criminal laws which prevail in

India are similar to those which exist here. But there are others which are called into being by phases of life peculiar to the East. As far as practicable the Indian Criminal Code would seem to have been framed upon Western lines. It provides for offences against the State and public tranquillity, which is particularly appropriate at the moment I am writing, inasmuch as a good deal of rioting has been going on, and a certain British politician is busy tub-thumping through a disaffected district. The law was, of course, framed to deal principally with native disloyalty, but I presume it can be extended to intruders.

There is a law against bribery and corruption, which, however, the authorities do not seem too anxious to put into operation. The amount of both which exists in the ranks of the native police and magistracy is quite astonishing. It is not so much do the natives ever tell lies as do they ever tell the truth; but I shall deal with this elsewhere. Personation is another indictable offence, but in spite of the law some remarkable personations have occurred, particularly in relation to military pension frauds. Giving false information, refusing to take an oath or answer questions, avoiding service of summons, giving false evidence, harbouring or screening an offender,

personating a juryman, are all punishable offences. Many of the laws were evidently framed with a view to dealing with the native's apparent inability to give a correct version of anything.

For giving false information the offender may be fined or imprisoned, and for giving false evidence he may get three years. Anyone employed in mint operations who is guilty of altering the weight of coins may be sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Criminal negligence in regard to false weights and measures, offences against religious beliefs, kidnapping and dealing in slaves, are all provided for in the Code. For torturing a prisoner in order to extort a confession, a police constable or officer may be sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Albeit a confession made by a prisoner to his custodians is not accepted as evidence in a trial. A prisoner may make a confession both to the police and to the magistrate, but deny it *in toto* before the sessions judge. Nevertheless police constables are ever eager to extract confessions from suspected persons, and are not too nice in their methods of accomplishing their object. They do habitually torture their prisoners. The prospect of promotion has doubtless something to do with this, although it is also a survival of an ancient

legitimate custom. Under native *régimes* there was no police, the landlords being held responsible for the detection of crime. It was allowed to torture a prisoner to extort a confession. Sometimes they had their noses cut off, sometimes their hands, sometimes both. One such individual, however, made capital out of his disfigurements. Dressing up as an ogre he would attend fairs, attracting large crowds to himself, and while the latter were looking on in absorbed curiosity the "ogre's" confederates were busy picking pockets.

Sometimes the native police receive credit for tortures they have never inflicted. Here is a curious case in point. A burglary was committed, for which two men and a boy were arrested. The latter, named Gannai, confessed, and revealed the hiding-place of some of the stolen property. All three were taken in custody to the district headquarters. This was on a Saturday. In the evening they made a brief appearance before the magistrate, who adjourned the case till the following Thursday, the prisoners being taken away and confined in the local lock-up. Duly on the ensuing Thursday the case was heard. The youth, Gannai, asked that he might be allowed to sit down, as he was in pain. Asked to explain, he said that, prior to

being brought to headquarters, he had been commanded by the constable and watchman to point out where the remainder of the stolen property was hidden. As he was unable to do this he was laid on his face on the ground, and a broom which had been dipped in boiling oil passed over his back and legs. The youth was examined when, sure enough, there was unmistakable evidence of his having been burnt. The magistrate believed the story, held the burglary case in suspense, and committed the constable and watchman in custody to take their trial before a judge at the Court of Session on the charge of having inflicted torture to extort evidence.

But when the case came to be looked into there were presented many perplexing features. It was proved that when the youth was received in the lock-up on the previous Saturday he had no injuries about him, yet he had stated that it was before being brought in that he had been burnt. When, how, and by whom was he burnt? The following was the explanation. The prisoners were members of a gang of criminals, at the head of which was an *ex-jemadar*, named Patti Singh. The latter used his influence to obtain the release of his con-

federates. Without the youth's confession the evidence against him was flimsy. He must be made to contradict his confession. But what explanation could be given? Then he hit upon the expedient of getting Gannai to declare he had been tortured by the police. But there was no evidence to show for it. Then the evidence must be made. In this manner it was accomplished. Patti Singh had a relative whose son-in-law was hospital assistant at the jail, whose cousin was the lock-up warder. The two latter were bribed, and a blistering operation performed on Gannai. The blistering was done with oil of vitriol. But the plot miscarried, and the burglars had for prison companions several prison officials.

It seems scarcely credible that in the twentieth century tortures, falling little short of the atrocities practised by the Spanish Inquisition, should be employed upon human beings. Yet so it is in the East. A short time ago I had a conversation with an Armenian who had been confined in prison in Constantinople. He had been kidnapped and imprisoned there through the instrumentality of an interested relative. He was confined in an apartment with about a dozen other prisoners. Among the latter was a young

Jew, who had been subjected to unspeakable tortures in order to extort a confession. He had been beaten with spiked sticks, scalding hot eggs placed under his armpits, and he had been fastened beneath dripping hot water, so arranged that the water constantly dripped upon a part of his head which was bald. The devices failed, however, for he made no confession.

Dacoity is a very serious crime in India, and a judge is empowered to inflict as much as ten years' imprisonment upon such offenders. It is still much in evidence there, as is the crime of forgery. In skill the Oriental criminal can learn nothing from his Western brethren as an illegal "penman." I should rather consider that he could give him "points." I am somewhat in doubt as to the punishment provided for this crime in India by the Code. For instance, Section 465 is thus worded, "Whoever commits forgery shall be punished with imprisonment of either description (viz., rigorous or simple) for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both." It is a peculiarity of Indian criminal law that nearly all penalties are or may be supplemented with a fine, even in the cases of long terms of imprisonment and transportation. Which reminds one of the "long ago" in this

country, when a convicted criminal would be sentenced to death and fined a farthing. Further on in the Code there is set forth various degrees and forms of forgery, for which various terms of imprisonment may be inflicted, ranging from a few years to many. Yet Section 465 seems to refer to forgery generally, with two years' imprisonment as a maximum penalty, which, of course, is absurdly light. I say it "seems" to do—I must leave it at that. I have given the exact wording. For a repetition of the offence a whipping may be added to the other punishment.

As might be supposed, the criminal laws of India relating to marriage are peculiar to that country—almost exclusively so. The only law in regard to it in common with this country that I can discover is that relating to bigamy, for which a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment is provided. For "co-habiting" ten years may be awarded. That is an "eye-opener"! If such a law prevailed here what a busy time the judges would have! There is also the inevitable supplemental fine. But the administration of this law in India is not all plain sailing, on account of the different creeds existing there. For instance, on one occasion a Christian convert married a woman according

to Christian rites, but subsequently, possibly repenting of his matrimonial bargain, returned to his former faith of Hinduism, wherein he married again according to Hindu law. Whereupon he was arrested and charged with bigamy. The charge, however, could not be sustained, inasmuch as the Hindu law countenanced polygamy. He was convicted though in the court of first instance; but the verdict was set aside upon appeal. There has been a form of appeal in criminal cases in India for many years, although not here.[1] Curious, is it not? We always were more solicitous for the stranger both within and without our gates than for the members of our own family.

For adultery a man may receive five years' imprisonment, and be fined; and for enticing away a married woman he may also be punished more or less severely. These laws might very well be introduced into this country, and be the means of laying by the heels the lascivious scoundrels who break up homes, or at all events contribute largely to such destruction. But—a big but this—the wife is not regarded as an abettor. Now, we know very well that it takes two to commit adultery. If the woman is a consenting party she is an accomplice in a

[1] This is not so now.

crime. If she is not a consenting party, then the man is guilty of rape. But the criminal law of India says no. In this country we treat the crime of sodomy in the same one-sided fashion. It takes two to commit the offence, as it does that of adultery, but we only punish one of the miscreants. In this class of crime the law does not regard the *receiver* worse than the thief, but better. I must leave the legal mind to fathom this—it is quite beyond me.

Also in India if a man uses insulting language or gestures towards a woman he may receive a year's imprisonment, or be fined, or both. This is a good law, and it is to be hoped that there is something more real in it than a mere enactment. We have a similar law in this country, which, however, is not put into force sufficiently often. Some of our suburban thoroughfares on Saturday and Sunday are unfit for any decent-minded individual to pass through, particularly women and young children. But one rarely sees a policeman interfere with the foul-mouthed wretches. If it is not a policeman's first duty to keep order in the public thoroughfares, where does his duty begin?

In India they treat the offence of drunkenness —mere drunkenness—somewhat lightly. Such

an offender may be kept to simple imprisonment for twenty-four hours, or be fined ten rupees (a rupee is 1s. 4d.), or both. This is as it should be, for a drunkard punishes himself as much, if not more, than he does anybody else.

It should be clearly understood that these laws may be varied somewhat in different parts of the Continent, but they are fundamentally the same throughout. One can only deal with basic principles in this book, it is impossible to go into all the ramifications of technicalities, such a task would be impossible in a single volume, or, it might be, in a dozen volumes. It should also be borne in mind that revisions of laws and statutes are constantly in progress in India, and before you have quite digested a section or a sub-section you may discover that it has been considerably altered in revision. Before you have had time to duly note this the revision may have been re-revised, and the whole section substituted by something else. We must not endeavour to follow the will-'o-the-wisp of Indian criminal law amendments, as brought about by the assiduous and industrious and never-tiring administrative officers there, or we may be late for the Resurrection. We must be content with deducing a great deal from that which is definite and stationary.

The various forms of punishment are death (by hanging), transportation (which I shall deal with specially later on), penal servitude, imprisonment (of two kinds, namely, rigorous, that is to say, with hard labour, and simple, without hard labour), forfeiture of property, fine, and whipping. A prisoner condemned to death, but subsequently reprieved, may be confined either in a central or a local prison (to be hereafter described). Only prisoners sentenced to penal servitude, or imprisonment, for life, and those sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for serious crimes are transported. Until such prisoners are actually deported they are treated as rigorous imprisonment convicts; but the period of their incarceration begins immediately upon being sentenced. A "life" sentence is formally considered to be twenty years. Criminals under sixteen may be sent to a reformatory. A prisoner may be kept in solitary confinement for not more than a fortnight at a stretch, nor for more than a maximum period of three months. In the case of a prisoner suffering forfeiture of property for "waging war," he cannot re-inherit until he is pardoned.

Such are briefly the various kinds of punishable offences, and the different degrees of punishment they may merit.

CHAPTER V

THE POLICE FORCE

THE rank and file of the Indian police consists of natives, the superior grades being Europeans. If the London policeman's lot is not a happy one, the lot of the Oriental "bobby" is a most miserable one, which doubtless accounts for his manifold shortcomings. Like his Western brethren he is, as I have already pointed out, most zealous in procuring convictions. But it is not he who is to blame for this so much as the system under which he works. He is partly a soldier, and is sometimes so armed, and he has to deal with a desperate and bloodthirsty class of criminals, who are also superlatively crafty and subtle. He is usually regarded as an unmitigated nuisance by all those who are not policemen, and is generally unpopular. He is ill-paid, and generally despised; they are of all sorts and sizes, and half of them are quite illiterate; their slender pay induces

them to eke it out in various corrupt ways. Their chances of promotion are not too rosy or alluring, for most of the appointments worth having are filled by Europeans, and their eventual pension, if they should ever reach it, would not do much more than keep a youth of the West in cigarettes. Innumerable schemes have from time to time been propounded for the betterment of their condition by the police officials upon the spot, but so far apparently without success. The Government has always had something more important to occupy their time.

Police constables are recruited by the District Superintendent, who, of course, is a European. Each recruit, upon enrolment, is given a certificate of his appointment, containing particulars of his race, name, age, caste or religion, and of his previous service, if any. Upon quitting the service the certificate must be returned. This document is the Indian police constable's authority, as the "ticket" is of the detective here. A constable may be suspended, reduced, or dismissed for cruelty, perverseness, remissness, or negligence in the discharge of his duty, or he may be fined a month's pay. He may also be punished with three days' confinement

for insubordination or insolence to his superior. He is considered to be on duty wherever he is placed, and he is liable to be transferred summarily. He may not engage in any kind of trade either as principal or agent, or be concerned in any purchase of land in the district wherein he is stationed, without special permission. In fact he may not, without written sanction, embark in any kind of employment other than that of his police duty. He may not withdraw from duty or resign until the expiration of two months after written notice of his intention so to do has been given by him to the District Superintendent, and until he has fully discharged any debt due by him, as a police officer, to Government or to any police fund. If he is unwell, mentally or physically unfitted for duty, and produces a medical certificate to that effect, he may retire upon giving a satisfactory security for the payment of any debt due by him.

If he absents himself without first observing these rules he forfeits all pay due to him, and may be also fined. Upon retiring, in addition to surrendering his certificate, he will also have to give up all arms, accoutrements, clothing and other necessaries, which have been furnished

to him for the execution of his office. If he does not, a warrant may be issued and the articles in question seized, although the warrant shall not apply to any articles which may be proved to legitimately belong to the officer.

If any would-be police constable makes a false declaration in order to obtain employment, or a constable in employment makes a false declaration in order to resign, he may be imprisoned for three months, or fined a hundred rupees. A similar punishment is meted out to an officer found guilty of cowardice. An officer who, having obtained leave of absence, fails to report himself at the expiration of the term shall be considered to have withdrawn himself from duty. They have the dog nuisance in India as in this country, and it is provided for by the Police Act. In certain districts every dog is required to be led or muzzled, so that it can at the same time "breathe and drink." The police may seize a dog not so provided, and if it be not claimed by the owner within three days, it may be destroyed or sold. There are many small street offences which the police are called upon to deal with, including obstructing a footway, exhibiting mimetic, musical or

other performances, slaughtering animals in the street, defiling water in public wells, obstructing bathers, obstructing passengers, begging and exposing offensive ailments, etc. An officer wrongfully arresting anybody, or wrongfully detaining property, is liable to be imprisoned for two months, or fined.

So it must be admitted that the lot of an Indian policeman is not exactly a bed of roses.

But the superior grades, the European section of the force, are very differently dealt with. They are a fine body of officials, occupying lucrative appointments. They have all been well trained, and invariably acquit themselves with distinction under most trying and exacting conditions. One is struck, in investigating the conditions of qualification and the subsequent field of promotion, what a fine opportunity for carving out a distinguished career for themselves the India Police Service offers to young Englishmen. All members of the superior grades of police are recruited in Europe, and the following are the methods of procedure. First, though, let us give a list of the various appointments, and the remuneration attaching thereto.

These are:

Post.	Remuneration.
Assistant Superintendent	250 to 500 rupees a month (£16, 13s. 4d., to £33, 6s. 8d.).
District „	600 to 1,000 rupees a month (£40, to £66, 13s. 4d.).
Deputy Inspector-General	1,200 to 1,400 rupees a month (£80, to £93, 6s. 8.).
Commissioner	1,500 rupees a month (£100, 0s. 0d.).
Inspector-General	2,500 rupees a month (£166, 13s. 4d.).

These figures refer to the Presidency of Madras. There is, of course, a pension attached to each appointment after a certain number of years service.

The following is the method of recruitment.

The qualifications required of the candidate are almost identical with those required for the Sandhurst examination. It is a competitive examination held in London, and candidates must be above nineteen, and under twenty-one years of age on the 1st June of the year of application. They must be unmarried, and if they marry before reaching India they will forfeit their appointments. Application must be made (there is no particular printed form) to the Secretary of the Judicial and Public

Departments, giving particulars of parentage, consent of guardians to candidature, where educated, testimonials of conduct during last four years, name of province in which applicant prefers to serve. Having successfully undergone a medical examination he will be ready to undergo an examination before the Civil Service Commissioners, for which a fee of £2 is required. The subjects which it will be necessary for him to be proficient in are mathematics, English composition, and German or French, and for these he must obtain at least a third of the maximum number of marks. There are other optional subjects, such for instance as Latin, Greek, English history, botany, chemistry, physics, physical geography, and so on. Of these he may select any two. He may also take either freehand or geometrical drawing as an additional subject. He must also show proficiency in riding.

From the results of the above examinations candidates are selected in order of merit. The successful ones are told when they will be required to embark, and failure to do so on the appointed day, in the absence of sufficient explanation, is regarded as forfeiture of appointment. Free passage to India is provided by

the India Office. The candidate goes out first as a probationer at an initial salary of two hundred and fifty rupees a month. The period of probation is two years, when he will be called upon to undergo departmental examinations. If he fails to pass within the specified time he is liable to be removed from the Service. Unless he obtained other employment in India his free passage back would be paid. The departmental examinations or tests refer essentially to police work, a knowledge of which they are supposed to have acquired during the period of their probation; also of the vernacular language. Those who prove themselves proficient, will in due course blossom forth as Assistant Superintendents, and will thus have taken the first practical step on the road which may lead to an honourable and profitable future.

The training of probationers is very interesting. Let us look into it. On arrival they join the Police Training School at Vellore, where they are taught drill, plan drawing and anthropometry, and attend lectures in Law and Departmental Orders. They study the vernaculars under *munshis*, a kind of native schoolmaster. They will also practise equitation and law, and submit weekly reports to the Inspector-General

of Police. Altogether they spend about five months at the school. They are then drafted to some district, in order to learn their work practically. They will be initiated into the methods of conducting correspondence, drafting special reports, keeping accounts, preparing pension papers, pay bills, etc., maintaining the English crime register, and compiling and submitting crime and other returns. There will also be letters to be translated, *précis* of vernacular papers to be made, and "descriptive rolls" to be issued. Probationers also have to attend the magistrate's and session's courts, watch cases, make notes, and watch the mode of procedure generally. They will be subsequently required to give a very succinct account of all they have observed or acquired. In fact they have to make themselves generally proficient.

The police system may be deduced from the foregoing. As I have already stated, the system varies in detail according to the characteristics of different districts. In Burma, for instance, our latest territorial acquisition in the East, there are features in the system peculiar to that place. The police use steam launches, neat little crafts, fitted with a cabin in the bows,

containing a folding table, a couple of settees which can be converted into sleeping bunks, and there is a bathroom adjoining. The launches are manned by natives, with a head man, or *serang*, to look after them. The engine-room staff consists of four men and a chief, called the "engine tindal." The average speed is 8 knots an hour. With the aid of these crafts the police of Burma are able to get to the distant scene of a crime in a very short time. The officer may be enjoying a nap in his bungalow when his *loogalay*, or native boy, may arouse him to the consciousness of the report of a serious crime, when he will immediately board his launch and steam to the scene of it to investigate. He seems to have solved the vexed problem of perpetual motion, and is almost continually on the "go." He performs prodigies of endurance and velocity, with the aid of not quite the best material for the purpose.

Occasionally drills are held, when the men are turned out, and an inspection made of their arms, accoutrements, clothing, etc. This is when weather permits, such being impossible during the monsoon, when an average of 6 inches of rain a day may fall, and pedestrians

may be said rather to swim than walk. There is also musketry drill, with blank ammunition. The head police station of an Indian district usually consists of a couple of stone buildings, one being the lock-up and the other the office wherein all the business is transacted. Police officers are expected to visit this depôt at least once a day, for the purpose of seeing what cases have been reported. The station is in charge of a head constable, who is usually a native. There are a few European head constables, but not many. This officer has under him a number of subordinate constables of different classes, and sergeants, who all have their special duties.

The lock-up is guarded by three constables under a sergeant, all armed with large knives, called *dás*. Nobody is allowed to approach the prisoners without the sanction of a superior officer. The lock-up is only used in which to confine prisoners until they can be sent to court (something equivalent to our local police station), whence, supposing they are remanded, they are conveyed to the town gaol, which is a kind of Brixton Prison, and the police who first dealt with them have no more concern about their safety. These lock-ups are very

secure, being really two iron-barred cages, one inside the other. If a prisoner succeeded in escaping from the inside one—which is not at all probable—he would still have another to break through. Moreover, the chances of escape are still further minimised by a gaoler visiting the lock-up once every quarter of an hour.

That the life of an Indian police officer is not characterised by many leisure moments may be gathered from the fact that some offices have as many as fifteen clerks. The work, too, does not consist entirely of criminal-catching, for there is a deal of office routine to be gone through. All the police work is done in this office, and every clerk has his own particular branch of it to see to. There is also the military police, armed with rifle and bayonet, who are employed as guards to treasuries and out-stations, and as escorts in conveying prisoners from one place to another. They are all fine fellows, picked men—they are in fact soldiers, although they are called police. Then there is the finger-print department. The system of taking finger-prints was adopted in India years before it came into vogue here. The finger impressions of every convicted person is taken by an officer specially instructed for that purpose. These

impressions are multiplied, and sent to the central office, where they are classified. The system is precisely the same as that which is in use here, which is familiar to most people, and therefore need not be described here. There is this difference, however, in its operation. Here the wily criminal realises its importance, and endeavours in various ways to neutralise its value. In India, on the contrary, and curiously enough, the native regards it as a sheer waste of time, a delusion which the officials are not at all anxious to dispel. In Burma, in addition to using launches, officers also drive about in traps.

A native criminal will not lie so much to a European as he will to a native officer; but the latter is usually better able to obtain all, or the nearest approach to all the truth, than the former. He is able to mix intimately with the villagers, who would be wary and reticent with the European, chat, and eat betel-nut with them, and so extract valuable information.

It is all a wonderful system, vast in its dimensions, bewildering in its intricacies, astonishing in its achievements. It is, therefore, with regret that one has to face and record the lamentable instances of gross corruption on the part of the

rank and file of the police which occasionally come to the surface. Yet it is our duty so to do. I shall give one impressive instance of this, a case which stands prominently writ on the official records of Indian criminal statistics. In many ways the case is of deep and abiding interest, and it casts a brilliant sidelight, not only on native police maladministration, but also on native ignorance, hatred, uncharitableness, and mendacity. I shall throw the details of the case into narrative form. I do this for two reasons. Firstly, because the material lends itself eminently to that class of treatment, and secondly, because in that form it will the more readily get at the understanding of the reader. But it must have one or two chapters to itself.

CHAPTER VI

THE TERRIBLE ORDEAL OF MALEK CHAND

It was the month of March, and the year was 1882. The brief Indian twilight was closing in on the small hamlet of Mouzah Bhulat, in Lower Bengal, and the villagers were slowly wending their way homewards along the jungle paths. The memory of this beautiful evening in March must have lingered long afterwards in the mind of the watchman of the village, one Malek Chand, by reason of the contrast it afforded to the tragic and mystifying catastrophe that was even then impending over his head.

This Malek Chand was a young and stalwart peasant. As he came along the path that evening he wore on his head a yellow turban, while around his waist was the distinguishing belt of his office of *chaukidár*, or watchman. He was a good-hearted, kindly man, with a great affection for his four children and his wife Bharati. One of his children, a sweet little

ten-year-old girl named Nekjan, was walking behind him, happily trilling an old, familiar Bengali folk-song. Upon her bare, swarthy shoulder she carried a *khatia*, a long, heavy wooden implement, which was used as a pestle in the work of pounding rice in a stone mortar. The little Hindu maid had adorned her graceful and shapely arms with several simple bangles of glass, and her thrice-braided jet-black hair was surmounted by a crimson and green cotton handkerchief.

"Baba," said the child presently, "why are you so quiet to-night?"

"Why, dear," responded Malek, suddenly aroused from his unpleasant reverie, "Baba is worried."

"Worried?" echoed Nekjan, "about what?"

"About something you would not understand, Nekjan—about our neighbour Kadam Ali Fakir, and his wife Sarba, and others who seek to do me injury. They are all bad people, and tell lies about me."

"Yes, I have heard about them," gravely observed Nekjan; and then, brightening up, she exclaimed: "But who believes? I do not for one, Baba!"

At that moment three persons were seen

to be approaching along the path, and little Nekjan called her father's attention to them. The latter lifted his eyes, and as they rested upon the advancing trio a frown overspread his countenance, and his hand instinctively closed tighter upon the staff he carried. The three persons who had thus aroused the watchman's resentment were respectively the neighbour already referred to, Kadam Ali Fakir, his wife Sarba, and Dwarka Rai, a village constable. Sarba, a young peasant woman of handsome features and bold appearance, was conversing earnestly with the constable, and as the group came up with Malek she cast him a glance of unflinching scorn, which her husband supplemented with an angry scowl. The constable wheeled round.

"Mind you have plenty of money with you to-morrow, Malek," he exclaimed; "you will need it."

At this Malek became very angry. Facing his persecutors with flaming eyes, he responded: "And mind you keep your tongues from lying, and Kadam Ali his bull from wandering on to my premises of a night, or mischief will be done."

With this exchange of angry words the disputants went their opposite ways.

What was the cause of this ill-feeling towards Malek Chand? The poor *chaukidár* had had the misfortune—as it subsequently proved—to win a trivial action at law against the aforesaid Kadam Ali Fakir. Since then his life had been made a burden to him by systematic and petty annoyances on the part of his neighbour and his estimable wife, with others whom they contrived to enlist under their banner. This woman Sarba was a vain and evil person, and in order to sow dissension between Malek and his wife had made a show of what is euphemistically termed "setting her cap" at him. He, however, was too sensible a man to take any serious notice of her allurements. But, alas! for him, he could not stop malicious tongues from wagging, nor the worst of mischief accruing. Among other things, his amiable neighbours, Kadim Ali Fakir and his wife trumped up a grave charge against him, namely, of having visited their cottage in the absence of the husband for the purpose of committing an outrage on the wife. The action was to be heard on the morrow, the complaint having been laid at the town of Bongong. Doubtless, as in so many native cases, falsehood would supply the place of absent fact, and the un-

fortunate watchman expected to be somewhat heavily fined—hence the constable's gibe, "Mind you have plenty of money with you." As matters transpired, however, the action was destined never to be heard, being thrust out of all consideration by an event of immeasurably graver import.

While the above altercation was in progress, Dhanbani, Malek's cow, had wandered on to her fodder, and her calf in the compound of Malek's cottage. A little farther along the lane, near the temple of Sîva, Malek encountered a neighbour named Umesh Ghazi, and engaged in earnest conversation with him on the subject of the case to be heard on the morrow. Having bade adieu to this man, one of the few neighbours who were friendly towards him, Malek saw his wife, Bharati, near the corner of an onion-field, close by his cottage. With her was her child, Golak Mani, a little girl about two years the junior of Nekjan, and across her left hip she held another infant. Malek greeted his daughter, Golak Mani, affectionately, taking her up in his arms and caressing her. Curiously enough, and significant in the light of subsequent events, the child made no response to her father's endearments, nor seemed to welcome them.

The wife, Bharati, was a middle-aged woman, of a surly and morose disposition, and the child, Golak Mani, took after her. Bharati's welcome to her dispirited husband took the form of angry remarks concerning Sarba, clearly indicating the jealous bent of her mind. Malek's reply was to entreat her not to pester him with the names of any of that "nest of vipers," and a request to her to prepare the evening meal.

Meanwhile little Nekjan had gone ahead to the cottage, and placed the wooden pestle she had been carrying against the wall of the cottage under the verandah. As Malek entered the cottage he brushed against the pestle, causing it to fall, and as it did so it struck the glass bangles on Nekjan's arm, breaking them. Immediately Bharati set up a lamentation, bewailing the ill-luck that would ensue in consequence of this mishap—her mind being steeped in superstition. But little Nekjan made light of it, and, kissing her father's knee to avert the ill-omen, went indoors to prepare the cooking utensils.

Then Malek informed his wife that she would have to travel to his brother's house at Goga that night, in order to borrow the money wherewith to pay the expected fine on the morrow,

as he had not sufficient. Bharati would have to walk, and the journey would take about half an hour. She was to sleep at her brother-in-law's, and return home in the early dawn.

All things considered, it was a peaceful meal the little family of Malek Chand sat down to that evening, with the steaming rice and hot *chapatis* sending forth a pleasant odour. The calm of approaching night, the joy of sitting restfully with his beloved children around him, and listening to the glad music of the sweet little Nekjan's laughter, drove for the nonce all trouble from the mind of the watchman of Mouzah Bhulat. Even his ill-conditioned wife observed a truce before the simple but solemn words of the evening prayer, for protection from evil, which arose appealingly from the lips of Malek. Little did the watchman dream how soon he would be in sore need of it!

The meal concluded, Bharati, not without much grumbling, gathered her garments about her, took the infant to her breast, clasped another young child by the hand, and set forth upon her journey. This left at the cottage only Malek and his daughters Nekjan and Golak Mani. It was the custom, during that hot period of the year, for the villagers to sleep in

the open air, upon the verandahs of their houses, where, wrapped in white *chudders* or black wool blankets, they reclined upon sleeping-mats made of plaited palm leaves.

As the fast-sinking moon was casting a faint gleam across the compound, therefore, Malek and his two children prepared themselves for the night's repose. Malek paid his customary good-night visit to the cow-shed to see that all was secure, and then retired to his sleeping-mat in the verandah, lying down between his two children.

Thus peace and rest descended upon the little village of Mouzah Bhulat, in Lower Bengal, on that memorable March night of the year 1882. Not a sound broke the all-pervading stillness, save the occasional howl of a jackal, and the whisper of the breeze as it played lightly about the tree-tops. There was no hint of the grim and mysterious tragedy so near at hand.

The light of dawning day was yet but a ghostly vapour when a near neighbour of Malek's, rising betimes to attend to some early duties, thought she heard a cry of distress. She paused in her occupation and listened. Yes; there it was again, sure enough—a sob of grief, a moan of anguish. What could it mean? She

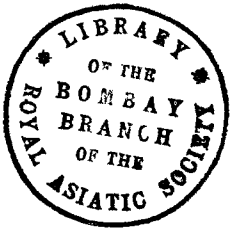
determined to make enquiries, so, taking a lamp in her hand, she walked a few yards from her house and listened again. The cry was repeated, and moving on in the direction whence it came she found herself at the hut of Malek Chand. Sitting upon the step of the verandah of Malek's house the woman saw the watchman himself, his head buried in his folded arms. He was rocking violently to and fro, and moaning distractedly. By this time other neighbours had been disturbed by his loud lamentations, and now came hurrying to the spot, some carrying lights. Among these arrivals were Umesh Ghazi and his wife, Dhiru Bibi, a sister of Bharati, Malek's wife. Clamorously they questioned the watchman as to the cause of his grief, and he then revealed the tragic fact that his beloved daughter, Nekjan, lay dead upon the verandah! At this announcement there arose a cry of horror, and several of the neighbours made their way on to the verandah, where the light of the lamps fell upon the figure of poor little Nekjan—stone dead.

While they were chattering together excitedly, all asking questions at once, there arrived at the hut a grave, elderly villager, named Uma Charan Sirkar, a member of the *punchayet*, for whom

the others made respectful way. Having learned what had happened, he proceeded to examine the body of Nekjan. He found at the base of the ribs a small punctured wound, bloodless, and with compressed edges. He questioned Malek as to what had caused the child's death, and the watchman wailed forth that he knew nothing save that he had gone into the onion-field for a few minutes, and upon his return had found his daughter lying dead as they saw her now. The puzzled councillor suggested that a snake-bite had worked the mischief, and Malek agreed that there had been some talk about the presence of cobras near the cottage. The villagers at once accepted this version of the affair as being most probable, and Uma Charan, hastily inspecting the immediate surroundings of the verandah, came upon several snake-holes near the wall. He thereupon directed that a mattock and basket be fetched, and the clay floor of the verandah dug up. This was done, but no snakes were discovered.

Up to this time, in spite of all the noise, the other child, Golak Mani, had remained asleep, or apparently asleep. The sound of the digging, however, aroused her, and she fell to sobbing at the sight of her dead sister.

Thus far the tragedy. I shall next proceed to describe the sequel, by which means we shall obtain a very good insight into how a criminal trial is conducted in India, and learn a good deal of Indian police court and criminal court procedure.



CHAPTER VII

A CRIMINAL TRIAL

THE councillor now advised Malek to proceed at once to the police station and report the occurrence himself, and directed that a spear found near the cow-path should be taken care of. This weapon was one which Malek was in the habit of taking with him on his nightly rounds, and played a very important part in subsequent events. Before Bharati had returned from Goga, the distracted Malek set forth for the police station, where he found the inspector, one Cholan Rahman, a fairly upright man, who had friendly feelings towards Malek. The latter told his tale, giving the so-far accepted version of snake-bite, but supplementing it with a half-hearted suggestion that the child's death might have been the work of his enemy, Kadam Ali, so that it might reflect upon him, Malek. The inspector, however, very wisely advised his neighbour not to entertain that notion, but to

adhere to the snake-bite theory, and then instructed his head constable to proceed to the watchman's house to report upon the case, telling him not to accept money from Malek, as he knew him to be a poor man. This clearly demonstrates how wide-spread is the custom among the police of exacting bribes. Here we have an officer directing his subordinate, almost as a favour, not to apply the process to this particular individual, because he is poor, and unable to stand it. A curious situation, truly. The constable's name was Ram Das Sircar, who, in the absence of blood-money, grossly neglected the case. He did not put in an appearance at the watchman's hut until sundown. Moreover, he soon after washed his hands entirely of the affair, transferring the business to a covetous subordinate, Dwarka Rai by name, who we have already met in the company of Malek's enemies.

In the meantime Malek had returned home to find his wife returned from her mission, and, as usual, full of bitter reproaches for her unfortunate spouse. She seemed half crazed with grief, and eventually retired to her mother's house close by, taking her child, Golak Mani, with her. This was on Tuesday, 28th March.

The reader should take note of the different dates. On the following day, Wednesday, the 29th, there was more digging for possible snakes, but none were found. On this day also, the body of the deceased child was conveyed to Bongong, there to have a *post-mortem* examination made upon it by the Civil Hospital assistant. Malek accompanied the body. This local medico, after a perfunctory examination, reported in effect as follows. The child died, said he, not from snake-bite, but from the thrust of a spear in the body, an injury that might very well have been caused by the weapon found near the cow-path of Malek's house.

This medical pronouncement spread consternation far and wide, and led to the most serious issues. Firstly, it upset the theory of snake-bite, which the police themselves had been content to accept; and, secondly, it set the village gossips of Mouzah Bhulat industriously wagging their tongues. During the irresponsible babble the names of Sarba and Kadam Ali were too frequently heard to bode any good for the watchman. The first practical result was an immediate *volte-face* movement on the part of the police. The snake-bite

business would not serve any longer, so they dropped it and fixed on the spear, and simultaneously on the unfortunate watchman, whom they promptly arrested. Malek, however, was what the police call an obstinate prisoner, that is to say, he would not confess the crime, but, on the contrary, stoutly maintained his innocence, persistently asserting his ignorance as to how his child's death was caused. This was irritating to the police, who much wanted to make their new case manifest, so they proceeded to try and quicken the prisoner's memory by thrusting large thorns into the quick of his finger-nails and toe-nails—a proceeding which is strictly forbidden by the law. But the obstinate fellow suffered in silence.

Malek was confined in the lock-up. On Thursday, the 30th, a bombshell fell upon the hapless head of the watchman, for upon that day, at her own house and in the presence of the police, Bharati accused her husband of the murder of their child, and in support of her charge produced Golak Mani as an eye-witness.

It appeared that the child, who had so far remained silent, suddenly declared that she had awakened to find her father in the act of killing her sister, stabbing her with a spear, and with

his foot upon her neck. When she remonstrated with him, she asserted, he told her to put the blame on Kadam Ali. After this amazing disclosure Malek was brought before the magistrate, who duly committed him to take his trial on the charge of murder most foul at the Court of Sessions. The luckless watchman was now indeed securely within the toils, and injustice, malice, perjury, and insane jealousy were hourly dragging him nearer to the gallows. In prison he maintained an almost unbroken silence, occasionally asserting his innocence by means of proverbs, as is the custom with his class, the Bengali. "The mud will not stick to the pankal-fish," he declared again and again. This may be thus paraphrased, "Guilt will not adhere to the innocent." The statement, however, is not invariably correct, and his philosophy nearly cost Malek his life.

We will now hasten on to the first trial of this unfortunate man.

This occurred on 16th May 1882, at the Nuddea Sessions Court, before Mr Justice Dickens, and the perplexing case was inscribed on the list, "The Empress *v.* Malek Chand, *chaukidár*," on committal by the deputy-magistrate (who may have been a native) of Bongong.

Oriental Crime

It was a sweltering hot day, and the punkahs were kept moving continually. The judge, attired in ordinary clothes, and minus wig, scarlet or ermine, or any other form of judicial panoply, sat upon the bench, which was not raised far above the ground; the jury, consisting of natives, had been sworn in. In India they must consist of not less than three nor more than nine. They are selected from a specially prepared list, not unlike the process which prevails in this country. The prisoner was upon the railed-in platform which did duty for a dock, near which was the witness-stand, also railed in. Two warders stood on either side of the prisoner. All the witnesses were in attendance, the accumulative sum of the prisoner's foes. A linguist was also present, for the purpose of interpreting into and from the vernacular. Counsel for the prosecution was ready with his case, but there was nobody to look after the prisoner's interests, other than himself, he being undefended. He was a poor man, and a friendless native under such circumstances is friendless indeed.

Malek Chand, strangely calm and collected in manner, stood eyeing the jury of his fellow-countrymen. The first witness was Golak Mani,

who mounted the platform and stood undismayed by the impressive assembly before her. It should be borne in mind that an Indian child, in precocity and mental equanimity, is the equal of a child twice her age in the West. The foreman of the jury first took her in hand (the jury in India play a far more important part, in the way of interrogating witnesses, than do juries in this country) and subjected her to an exhaustive interrogatory on the all-important subject of falsehood and its consequences. Golak Mani satisfied all present that she was quite alive to the necessity of telling the truth. She then gave her evidence, to the effect which has already been described, and did so unflinchingly. At the conclusion of her testimony there ensued an impressive and painful silence, which was rudely broken by the clear, resonant voice of the prisoner.

"Golak Mani," he said sadly, "who has taught you to speak such lying words?"

He fixed his piercing brown eyes upon the child who was swearing away the life of her father, but she met his gaze boldly, replying composedly: "No one has taught me, Baba; it is the truth which I have told to the Presence."

Then she retired from the platform.

Next came the police evidence, and this was followed by the dramatic appearance upon the witness-platform of Bharati, the hard-featured wife of the accused. She simply bore out the statement of Golak Mani. It is known to the reader, but was not known to the Court, and could only have been demonstrated by counsel for the defence, which the prisoner was most improperly deprived of, that neither Bharati nor Golak Mani had made any sort of incriminating statement until the Thursday following the day of the death. Had this been brought out it would have very materially discounted the value of such evidence, if it would not have destroyed it altogether.

Bharati's evidence was followed by that of several neighbouring villagers, of no great importance. This gave place to the illuminating evidence of the medical experts. The perfunctory examination of the native medico was in its essentials corroborated by the European doctor. He gave as a reason for the almost total absence of blood from the wound that death was partly caused by strangulation, which would materially reduce bleeding, particularly external bleeding. This went to confirm the

evidence for the prosecution, which it also concluded. Then followed an interrogatory by the judge — peculiar in its thoroughness, to the criminal law of India — during which Malek stoutly maintained his innocence.

The prisoner called three witnesses for the defence, but their statements were very weak, and weak evidence is almost worse than no evidence at all; it is like a man being damned with faint praise. All these witnesses could testify to was the fact, not disputed, that a report of death by snake-bite was current in the village. Then the judge summed up. And herein we shall see the same fatal prejudice and fallacy of reasoning which afflicts some of our judges here. The judge began by making an assertion—and the whole of his subsequent lengthy argument was in establishment of that assertion — that the deceased was murdered. This shut out any other possible theory, including, as it subsequently turned out, the correct one. The jury, in consequence, at once returned a verdict of "Guilty," and the judge proceeded, in the grim words of the death-sentence, to condemn the prisoner to be hanged.

Poor Malek! who shall look into that simple

and untutored mind of thine, and there read the truth which thou wilt not utter?

It was late in the afternoon, and the purple shadows were creeping across the rice-fields. A painful silence reigned in the court. The prisoner seemed stunned with the result of the trial, which must have appeared a cruel blow to his proverbial philosophy. His large eloquent eyes roved round the apartment in a vain search for a look of sympathy, for the crime of which he stood convicted was one abhorrent in the eyes of even the least law-abiding. He had been tried by a jury of his own countrymen and found guilty, the testimony of his own kith and kin had encompassed his doom, his neighbours had plotted to destroy him, and the terrible English judge had denounced him. He was alone with his Maker, and the words of the Koran applied to his case with tremendous force:

"*There is but one Judge who is just.*"

With an effort he drew himself up to his full height, and in his simple majesty dominated the whole assembly. Clearing his throat, he addressed the judge, and these were the words of Malek Chand, the humble *chaukidár* of Mouzah Bhulat: "I humbly pray the Presence

to order me to be hanged in my own village, because there will be people there who will well know that I die unjustly executed for a crime which I did not commit, and could never have committed."

Then the prisoner was removed.

CHAPTER VIII

CRIMINAL APPEAL

In India a condemned prisoner may, if he so chooses, and provided he has the means, appeal to the merciful consideration of the High Court. But the appeal, or notice thereof, must be lodged within seven days of condemnation, or the law will take its course. Who would thus move on behalf of luckless Malek Chand? The sands were falling fast, and if he were to be saved from a shameful death it were necessary that measures should be taken at once. His wife was seen on the subject, but that dutiful and affectionate creature is reported to have observed: "I am not going back upon what is done. Let him hang! It was written upon his forehead, and is no more than he has well deserved for his ill deeds."

Fortunately for British justice in India, and for the hapless Malek Chand, a Calcutta lawyer named Manomahan Ghose became acquainted with the details of the case, and, in the light of

his superior knowledge of native character, saw the glaring discrepancies and misconceptions contained in it, and the utter absence of motive for the crime. He voluntarily took up the case on behalf of the prisoner. He drew up a clear and concise analysis of all the evidence, and made a powerful appeal in the High Court of Calcutta on 13th June 1882, before Justices Wilson and M'Pherson—notice of the appeal having previously been lodged. After a deal of argument, the net result was that the sentence of death was set aside and a new trial ordered. This, however, was not accomplished without strenuous opposition from Mr Justice Dickens, whose *amour propre* got mixed up with his *amour patriæ*, and he chafed at the proceedings being taken. He wanted the case to be tried again in his court, and by a jury of his own selection. The indomitable Ghose, however, saw the fatal side of this arrangement, and applied to have the case removed entirely to another district, offering cogent reasons why this should be done, and an order was accordingly made to that effect. The second trial took place on 21st July, at the Alipur Sessions Court, and occupied four days.

In the meantime Mr Ghose had several

interviews with Malek Chand, and strenuously endeavoured to induce him to reveal all he knew, and so make the course of his counsel clearer. But the watchman obstinately refused to speak, merely repeating the irritating formula he had used so often: "I know nothing." Of one thing Mr Ghose felt quite sure, and that was that the child did not die from the wound in the body, in view of the absence of blood, but that this incision, however it was done, was made after death. He conveyed this impression to the prisoner, whereupon Malek's eyes lighted up, and he observed that as so much was known he would admit that the wound *was* made after death. He appeared somewhat relieved at being able to confess so much, but, pressed to make further revelations he became reticent again and would say nothing.

Thus, although Mr Ghose felt convinced that his client was not the murderer of the child, he was yet in ignorance as to how the death had been brought about. He therefore set himself to the task of crushing the evidence that had been put forward for the prosecution, and so procuring an acquittal of the prisoner in the absence of sufficient proof of guilt. More

than this he could not do, in view of his client's silence—a silence which would have made the majority of advocates throw up the defence in despair. But right well did Mr Ghose tackle his self-imposed task. At the trial he fixed upon the many glaring discrepancies in the testimony of the witnesses, and dealt very severely with the witnesses themselves. As a consequence much of the evidence completely collapsed. It was proved that the wound on the deceased's body had actually been tampered with by the zealous police, it having been enlarged with a twig of the wild indigo. Directly this was discovered the police themselves assumed a decidedly suspicious air of ignorance. As before, they were so replete with knowledge, they were now astonishingly bereft of it — a most remarkable lapse of memory. The medical evidence, too, was almost entirely negatived, the native doctor admitting the perfunctory nature of his autopsy.

The evidence of the digging in the watchman's verandah for snakes, which in the first trial had only been lightly touched upon, was brought out, and, most important of all, the extraordinary lapse of time between the discovery of the child's body and the public accusation by the

wife and child was made clear. The two most important witnesses—Bharati and Golak Mani —were subjected to a severe cross-examination, and, although they adhered in the main to their story, it was made quite manifest that the child had been well tutored, and was repeating her evidence parrot-fashion.

The judges in India do not confine themselves to making notes of the evidence only, as they do in this country, but they also chronicle their impressions. This is liable to operate in a most detrimental manner to the accused in the event of appeal, for the judge's notes are consulted. Now a judge is as liable to be mistaken or deceived by appearances as any other man, and to record his mere opinions together with the actual evidence is to work the prisoner an injustice. In the case in question, for instance, the evidence given by the child Golak Mani in the first trial was strengthened to the detriment of the accused by being supplemented with the judge's comments upon her apparent genuineness, truthfulness, and sincerity. As events turned out nothing could have been more erroneous, more calculated to divert the true course of justice. Taking the evidence alone, minus the comments, it was not nearly so

convincing. Mr Justice Dickens perceived that which he ought not to have done, and magnified his error by placing it on record. He did not, however, observe that which he should have done, and which was subsequently made clear by Mr Ghose, namely, that the child was repeating a well-learned lesson. It may be urged in defence of Mr Justice Dickens that he might not be supposed to know so much of the native character as Mr Ghose, and we must concede him as much, but the results are just as grave and deplorable.

When questions were put to Golak Mani on fresh topics by Mr Ghose she hesitated a good deal before replying, and evinced an unmistakable desire to consult somebody else. This was not lost upon the judge, Mr Justice Brett. As a last despairing blow at the unfortunate *chaukidár*, the prosecution put the bold-faced Sarba in the box. With uncompromising effrontery, and with her hand upon the Koran, she repeated the story that was current in her village concerning the murder; but the experienced Calcutta lawyer turned this incident to good account. Skilfully he drew from the unwilling lips of Kadam Ali's wife an admission of the ill-feeling which existed towards the

prisoner prior to this case in consequence of his success in the aforementioned law action. This, too, was not without its effect upon the minds of both judge and jury.

Finally, when all the available evidence had been adduced, the Government pleader was called upon to address the jury, which he did in a somewhat brief and half-hearted manner. Then came Mr Ghose's opportunity. He delivered a masterly speech, in which the unsatisfactory and altogether unreliable nature of the evidence for the prosecution was brought home to the minds of the jury with overwhelming force and logic. This was followed by an address by Mr Justice Brett. His analysis was unsparing; it hinted at so much doubt, mendacity, and dissimulation as to leave the issue of the trial a matter for simple forecast. In fact, when he had finished, the jury took only a minute to arrive at a unanimous verdict of "Not Guilty."

It was the fall of the evening of the 24th July 1882 when Malek Chand walked forth from prison a free man, side by side with his deliverer, Manomahan Ghose. They were bound for the bungalow of the latter. Malek walked with elastic step, and his eyes gleamed with joy born

of his newly-emancipated mind. For him his restored liberty was a priceless gift, and the air which greeted his nostrils was sweet indeed. Think of the feelings of this simple-minded peasant, snatched from the very brink of the grave after months of dreary captivity in prison! Malek's lightness of heart was shared also by the lawyer, for he had won a notable victory, saved a fellow-creature's life, and prevented a terrible miscarriage of justice.

The next morning Mr Ghose, looking out of his bungalow, observed the figures of a woman and a girl standing by a shaddock bush in the compound. The woman's head was bent in grief and self-abasement, and the child's slight frame was convulsed with sobbing. They were Bharati and Golak Mani, come for the forgiveness of the man whose life they had nearly sworn away. Mr Ghose realised the situation, and acted with promptitude. Turning to Malek, he said: "Malek, your wife and child are outside. Will you see them?"

The man seemed to be seized with a revulsion of feeling. "No, not now; I cannot," he said. "Don't ask me!" He covered his face with his hands and collapsed into a seat.

Mr Ghose did not pursue the subject, but

slowly and sadly made his way into the compound. The woman kept her eyes averted and her head bent down, but the child with tear-stained face looked appealingly towards the barrister. He beckoned her to come to him, and the child obeyed. The interview that ensued was a strange and painful one.

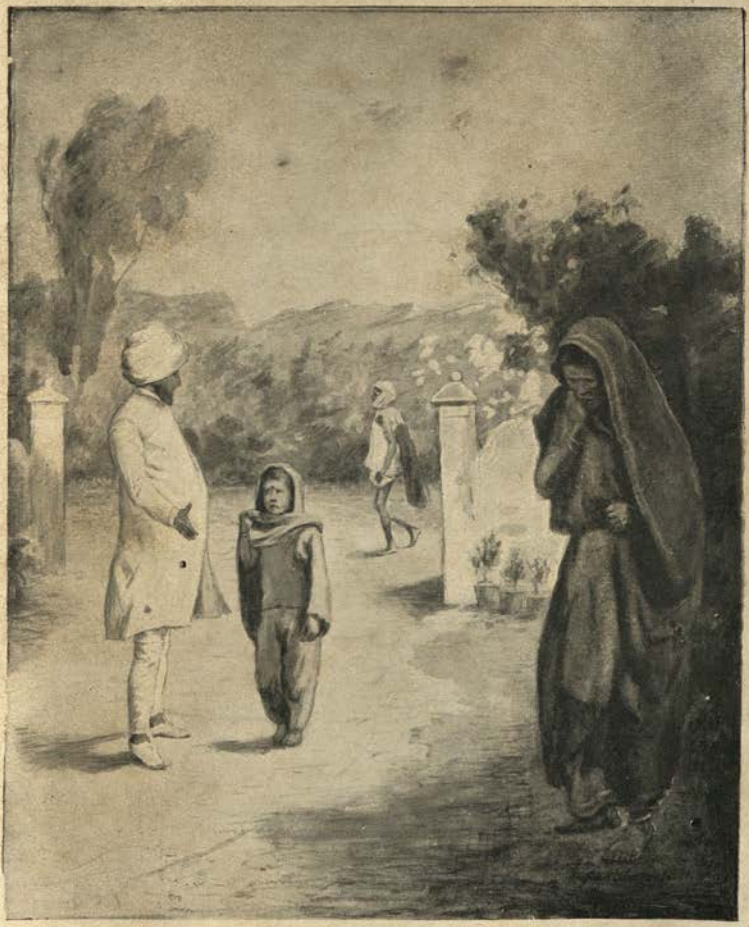
"Did you see your father kill your sister?" asked the lawyer sternly.

"No," sobbed the child, as she clutched convulsively to the hem of her garment, and her whole body trembled with emotion; "I was asleep and saw nothing."

"Yet you swore before the great judge that you saw your father commit the deed," continued Mr Ghose.

At this there was a fresh paroxysm of grief on the part of the child, whose suffering was pitiable to behold. Between her sobs she explained how she had been commanded by the constable, Dwarka, to tell the tale she told. He held a sword in his hand, she said, and told her she would have her head cut off with it if she disobeyed. She was supported in this by her mother, who had been partly deceived by the police, they having fabricated for her benefit an alleged confession of the prisoner. Bharati's

"ON A DEERSKIN MAT KNELT AN AGED MOHAMMEDAN SAGE."



"ALL THROUGH THE INTERVIEW BHARATI STOOD APART."

hatred was also kept aflame by her unreasoning jealousy of her good-looking neighbour Sarba—a sentiment, needless to say, which was sedulously nursed by Malek's enemies.

All through the interview Bharati stood apart with bowed head, evidently suffering keenly. When at length the sobbing child rejoined her mother the two moved slowly away, and disappeared behind the shaddock bush. They were paying for their sin a hundredfold.

The mystery was gradually being elucidated; but it yet remained to be made known how poor Nekjan met her death. Mr Ghose very much desired to clear this up, and after the departure of Bharati and Golak Mani he tackled Malek earnestly on the subject. The watchman seemed very suspicious and timid, so Mr Ghose impressed upon him the fact that, having been acquitted, the law could not now harm him, even if he had actually committed the deed.

"You have nothing to fear," concluded Ghose; "therefore tell me how your child died."

It was clear that Malek Chand was reluctant to reveal the secret, although at the same time it was obvious that he did not wish to deceive the man who had saved his life. Finally, he succumbed to the persuasions of Mr Ghose and,

prostrating himself at the feet of his benefactor, made confession to the following effect.

On the night of his child's death he had lain down with the determination fixed in his mind that, should the bull of Kadam Ali be found by him upon his premises that night, he would deal roughly with it. He accordingly placed the large, heavy piece of wood called a *khatia*, used in the rice mortar, against the wall of his cottage, as a weapon ready to his hand.

Almost two in the morning he awoke with, as he thought, the sound of footsteps in his ears. He listened a few moments, and heard sounds coming from the direction of the vegetable patch between the wall of the cottage and the cow-sheds. At once he jumped to the conclusion that it was Kadam Ali's bull rooting about his vegetables. It was a dark and cloudy night, and he could not see far from the verandah, but he snatched up the heavy *khatia* and hurled it with all his force in the direction of the cow-sheds. Immediately after he heard a cry of pain, and an exclamation: "Oh, Báp-re!"

Alarmed, he ran out to the vegetable patch, where he saw his child, Nekjan, writhing on the ground. Instantly he realised what had happened. The child had wandered out in the

night, and it was her footsteps he had heard. He had struck her in the back with the heavy implement, and she was dying. Tenderly he lifted her from the ground and bore her to the verandah, where she soon after expired. Malek was beside himself with grief, and was on the point of hastening to the neighbouring river to cast himself in and commit suicide when it occurred to him that he might first seek the advice of his friendly neighbour, Umesh Ghazi. Accordingly, he hastened to the latter's cottage, and, having quietly aroused him, acquainted him with what had happened, and besought him to give him advice.

The neighbour proceeded to Malek's cottage and examined the body of Nekjan. He then advised Malek to attribute the death to Kadam Ali, but this Malek would not hear of. It is typical of the native character that it does not seem to have occurred to either man to tell the truth concerning the accident; possibly they thought such a story would not be believed for an instant, in view of the many enemies Malek had in the village. After one or two other suggestions had been made, and rejected, Umesh Ghazi declared that the sad affair must be reported as snake-bite. But, objected

Malek, there was no wound; when a snake bites he leaves a wound. Umesh Ghazi then volunteered to make a wound in imitation of a snake-bite, and returned to his cottage to fetch a knife. It is a belief in certain parts of India that when a venomous snake bites a human being in a vital part of the body the victim at once loses consciousness; therefore Umesh Ghazi made a tiny punctured wound just below the ribs. Having done this he returned to his cottage, only reappearing when the general alarm was given. As for Malek, he sat down on the verandah, where he was subsequently found, and gave way to his grief. Up to that time the other child, Golak Mani, had not awakened.

Thus was the mystery at last cleared up. Poor Nekjan had met her death by misadventure, and not by foul murder. Malek, during his confession, protested with tears in his eyes that he would willingly have forfeited his own life to save that of his beloved one.

As to whether Malek Chand was ever reconciled to his wife the records do not concern themselves. In view of the great love he bore his offspring, however, albeit the "light of his

eyes," as he called Nekjan, had departed hence, it is highly probable that he was after a while impelled towards forgiveness, when Time the Healer had somewhat softened the anguish of the terrible ordeal through which he had passed.

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CHAPTER IX

THE MONEY-LENDER

In the East, as in the West, the money-lender is frequently an extortionate scoundrel, a merciless usurer, a relentless Shylock. He is the Jew of India, and succeeds in arousing that animosity and detestation which the average Hebrew engenders in other lands. He is a liar of a superlative order, and makes a positive study of mendacity and dissimulation. He causes endless misery, and not a little crime. Curiously enough the money-lender thrives more under British rule than he did in the days of native administration. Then a check was kept upon his rapacity by public opinion and the *punchayet*, and he was compelled to carry on his business in broad daylight. Now he borrows and deceives more, and ruins quietly, secretly, methodically. The native is ignorant, credulous, thriftless, extravagant, and becomes an easy and profitable prey to the Hindu capitalist. He mortgages his crops and his land,

and eventually the situation becomes identical to that in "The Miller and his Men"—"He who was my tenant is now my landlord." In other words, the money-lender played his cards to get possession of the land, and has succeeded only too well.

In order to show clearly the power for evil possessed by the money-lender in India, I cannot do better than describe a typical case which figures prominently in the annals of Indian crime. This I shall, as in the case of Malek Chand, put into narrative form.

The hour was that mysterious one which immediately precedes the dawn. The eastern horizon was slowly emerging from the gloom of night, and a ghostly suggestion of light was ascending imperceptibly into the heavens. The atmosphere was stifling, and the faint breeze that played about the surrounding foliage, and set the leaves whispering among themselves, did little or nothing to dispel the suffocating heat which still lingered in the wake of the previous scorching day. The village of J——, in the Bombay Presidency, still lay securely in the arms of Morpheus. All was quiet and seemingly peaceful in the bosom of the Mahratta community in that far-away corner of the

world. The first indistinct and hesitating notes of waking birds heralded the advancing dawn as it expanded in streaks above the tree-tops.

For two persons at least there had been no mental rest that night. On the verandah of a spacious bungalow, situated no great distance from the main thoroughfare of the village, in which were the small and unpretentious shops, there lay outstretched, upon a sleeping mat, the figure of a man. That he was troubled in his mind was clear to any observer, for he tossed his arms aimlessly about, and moaned and muttered indistinctly. As the breath of advancing day played with revivifying effect about his recumbent form, a servant emerged hastily and stealthily from the fast disappearing gloom, round the corner of the house, from the rear, went precipitately to the recumbent form, and whispered affrightedly in his ear: "Master! master! little Bhow—where is he?"

The man on the ground opened his eyes, rubbed them with his hands, raised himself on to his elbow, gazed confusedly into the face of the servant, and replied: "Little Bhow! What do you mean? Where is he?"

"Gone! gone!" reiterated the servant, in a tone of consternation.

"Gone!" he exclaimed; "gone where?"

The speaker, not yet apparently quite master of his perceptive faculties, and still partly held in the shackles of sleep, arose to his feet in a state of great perturbation. His name was Busappa Patel, a Mahratta cotton-grower of J——, a son of the late Yellapa Patel, and the "little Bhow" referred to was his child, a small boy of six years of age. A great favourite in the village, he had been as happy a little fellow as was to be met with in a day's march.

"Gone, Rámájee," repeated the bewildered Busappa! my little Bhow gone? Why, he was with me but a short while ago."

"I thought he was with you, master," said Rámájee; "but when I arose, and came out here I saw that you were alone. Then I thought little Bhow had wandered away somewhere about the house, so I searched everywhere about, but could not find him. What can have become of him?"

"He must be here somewhere, Rámájee," said Busappa emphatically, and now apparently fully alive to the condition of affairs. "Let us look."

They searched everywhere, in and about the house, but no trace could they discover of the missing child. It was quite clear that some-

thing of an unusual character had happened, for Bhow would not leave his father in the night without some tangible reason for it. Cases of kidnapping are not infrequent in India, and a sinister reason for the disappearance of Busappa's only child soon began to present itself. By the time the father and his servant had concluded their search it was broad daylight. The alarm was given, and the police informed of the occurrence. The officers came to the bungalow, and instituted a further search, extending their investigations through the village. They looked everywhere, in and out of houses, through compounds, or gardens, into every nook and corner, but no trace of the child could be found. It was very puzzling, not to say significant. The worst was feared, and not unnaturally the father, Busappa Patel, was distracted and much moved at the occurrence.

Eventually the police, during their search, came to the shop and residence of Dewchund the Shroff, the village *sowkar*, or money-lender. In front was a small raised verandah, and a shuttered window; the shutters were still closed. Dewchund the Shroff, like money-lenders in other parts of the world, was not the best loved man in the community wherein

he lived and traded. He was looked upon as a necessary, sometimes convenient, evil; but an evil nevertheless. The villagers regarded him askance; but rarely allowed their animosity to carry them to any more demonstrative acts. You see Dewchund had so many of them on his books, and he also had the law on his side, so his neighbours were compelled to extend to him a certain show of respect, if it was but a distant one. He was regarded as a totally unscrupulous and avaricious man, with how much of justice it is difficult to say.

Fate seemed to play into the *sowkar's* hands, the very elements sometimes combining to drive the villagers to him for help. Bad crops meant good business for Dewchund the Shroff, and more power over his clients, some of whom had been in his hands for years. He had, for instance, had business relations with the Patel family ever since Busappa was quite a young man, and a double line had not yet even been drawn under their account. Sometimes the Shroff might be induced to extend to a needy client some little consideration, but he was liked none the more for it, for it argued more power to the *sowkar*, increased the friction, and intensified the irritation of his neighbours. He always

insisted upon receiving his due meed of profit, his pound of flesh, and exacting his arbitrary conditions, which appeared to the impoverished and struggling debtor as avaricious, although quite fair and equitable to the capitalist.

Dewchund belied, in his outward appearance, the character ascribed to him by the bulk of his neighbours. He was a slim, sleek, mild-mannered, and sibilant voiced man, and only upon rare occasions could he be impelled to speak above a modulated tone. He was always deferential, and seemed to lead a quiet life of introspection. Daily he might be seen squatting in his little shop, pouring over some business document, or talking pleasantly with little Bhow, who, used to make frequent calls on the old *sowkar*, who gave him little sweetmeats, or gladdened his child's heart with some trifling toy or other. The figure of little Bhow was well known in the village, he was always conspicuous in fact, dressed in a bright crimson jacket, and wearing silver anklets and bangles. He had been a petted child, and the pride of his parents. The villagers remarked the friendship apparently existing between the child and the *sowkar*, and smiled sardonically thereat. They were not deceived, they assured themselves, by

Dewchund's benign and persuasive manner, arguing that a man may smile and still be a villain.

The police hammered on the shutters of the *sowkar's* shop. The Shroff opened to them, and directly he caught sight of the officers his generally bland-like face wore a look of consternation.

"The child of Busappa Patel, little Bhow, is missing. We search for him."

When the leading officer pronounced these words the Shroff's alarm increased tenfold. His spare and sparsely clothed figure trembled violently as with the ague, his very knees knocking together. The officers noticed this, and duly weighed it in their minds.

"Little Bhow!" stammered the Shroff. "He is not here. Why do you come to me?"

"He has been in the habit of visiting you pretty frequently," said the leading officer. "When did you see him last?"

"Yesterday," replied the Shroff in a faint voice. "He went away, and I have not seen him since."

"Why do you tremble?" challenged the officer.

"Your sudden and early visit, your suspicion," stammered the Shroff, almost tearfully; "poor little Bhow, I loved the child," and then he broke down.

"We shall search your place thoroughly" said the officer; "and we shall require your presence the whole time."

The Shroff looked superlatively miserable as the officers commenced operations. Busappa had not accompanied the police the whole way, but had returned to his house. The indefatigable efforts of the officers went unrewarded until they reached a shed at the back of the premises, where was a big pile of fuel which had obviously but recently been disturbed, and beside it a shovel, which bore signs of having been in use within the last hour or two.

The searchers cast a keen glance of scrutiny at Dewchund, and noticed that the face of the financier had gone a shade paler. Bending down, and looking closely at the ground, they were able to make out distinct traces of footmarks. In the immediate vicinity of the fuel they were confused and indistinct, as though the feet that made them had moved rapidly hither and thither. But a short distance farther off they became more distinct, and following these the officers found themselves outside the shed, the trail heading towards the open country beyond.

Returning to the shed, they more closely scrutinised the heap of fuel, consisting of dried

cow-dung. It was clear that it had been extensively disturbed, but not with the spade, on which there were no traces of fuel, although small deposits of earth were clinging to it. The chief officer, moved with a sudden inspiration and resolution, directed one of his subordinates to pick up the shovel, and bring it along with him. He then directed his attention to the footmarks without, and followed the trail with an attentive eye. It led them over fields and across lanes, into a neighbouring *nullah*. Here the trail ended in another jumble of footmarks, where the earth had been newly disturbed. The ground had been dug up, and roughly levelled again. With a gesture the chief officer beckoned to his subordinate who carried the spade, and, pointing to the disturbed area, exclaimed "Dig!"

Dewchund the Shroff presented a sorry appearance as the digging operations began. His face wore an ashen, grey pallor, and he seemed to be held speechless in the grasp of a nameless horror. He uttered not a word, but his eyes were fixed with a weird fascination upon the spot where the earth was being industriously thrown up, and an official stood guard on either side of him. All eyes were riveted upon the

deepening hole that was forming beneath the excavations of the *sowkar's* own spade, and no sound broke the tense silence but the thrust of this implement, and the heavy breathing of the labourer. Presently, as the digger lifted the loaded spade from the earth, a small portion of wearing apparel caught on the corner of the tool, and was lifted some inches out of the ground. An exclamation followed, the spade was lowered, and the earth carefully removed from about the garment. Soon there came to light a small foot — a child's foot — and the murder was out!

The body of poor little Bhow was removed, and Dewchund found himself in secure custody, charged with the murder of the child. Vehemently protesting his innocence, he was removed to prison, where the grave charge was formally made against him. His incoherent statements in confirmation of his plea of innocence were merely regarded as desperate efforts of a guilty man to save his neck. As how else could they be regarded, with such damning evidence against him? His very name was execrated by the villagers, by whom he was unanimously condemned immediately the crime was made known. He was thrown into

prison to await his appearance before the deputy-magistrate. In the meantime the *punchayet*, or enquiry, before a coroner's jury, was held—a proceeding even a trifle more perfunctory than our own. Then came the charge before a magistrate, and the examination of witnesses.

The evidence for the prosecution was strong. Neighbours swore to the frequent visits paid to the prisoner by the deceased child, and how he was always wearing silver ornaments, which could not now be found. One of the neighbours swore to seeing the prisoner going cautiously into his house early on the morning of the crime, and a basket-maker, a number of whom were camped near the *nullah* where the body was found, testified to also seeing the prisoner early on the morning in question hurrying away from the *nullah*. None of this evidence was the prisoner able to disprove. He employed a *vakil*, or counsel, but the latter, although he worked manfully for his client, was quite unable to shake the evidence for the prosecution in the smallest degree. In fact he himself implicitly believed in the guilt of the prisoner, and despaired of being able to render him any effective service.

As a motive, the prosecution averred that the prisoner had murdered the boy for the silver trinkets he was wearing, and that he had encouraged the child's visits with a view to accomplishing his nefarious purpose. This theory was held to be good, and the deputy-magistrate committed him, on a verdict of guilty, to take his trial at the Sessions Court of Poona. He continued to stoutly protest his innocence, making statements involving various persons, including the father, Busappa Patel himself. This was regarded with scorn and contempt, for the family was well known and respected. At one time they had been very wealthy.

During the American Civil War, Busappa's father, Yellapa Patel, had made a large sum of money out of cotton, in consequence of which the family indulged in much extravagance. They decked their women-folk with gorgeous silks, and their children with ornaments and gaudy petticoats. The silver bangles of little Bhow in question were, in fact, a survival in detail of this period of affluence. They went in largely for sport, bought trotting bullocks, giving sometimes as much as twelve hundred to fifteen hundred rupees for a single animal. They also indulged in silver yokes and

mountings to the harness, and even went so far as to have silver tyres to the wheels of the vehicles. In fact, the Patels were among the first group of the first families of their locality.

Then came a change, indeed a series of changes, and a steady descent of their greatness. The war came to an end, and so did their big cotton profits. Having been the reverse of provident and prudent, they had very little reserve to fall back upon, and had to go the way of the backward tide. Then Yellapa Patel died, and bad seasons ensued. Cattle also died from drought and disease, and in the years 1876 to 1877 there were both famine and a plague of rats. The ultimate result of all this was Busappa was compelled to have recourse to the village *sowkar*, Dewchund, to whom he eventually became deeply indebted. At length his wife died, and he was left with the child who had just met so tragic a fate. But apparently Busappa must have latterly improved his position, for upon the books and documents of Dewchund being seized and examined, it was found that the money owing to him by Busappa had been repaid, and the account was clear.

The Shroff's counsel cast about him for some tangible theory of defence, and confessed to himself that the prospect looked well-nigh hopeless. What of the basket-makers? They were known to be a rough lot, quite capable of robbery with violence. They were camped near the *nullah* and might very well have inveigled the child away from its home, taken him to the fields, committed the deed, buried the body, and then, with a view of diverting suspicion from themselves, have used the Shroff's spade to bury the body, replacing it in the outhouse where it was found. This was the most promising theory that he could think of, although it did not coincide with his client's own story of what he thought must have occurred. But then he felt certain his client was guilty, and that his protestations of innocence were a mere "try on." However, he determined to adopt the basket-maker theory, and sought an interview with his client in prison. Having informed him of the line of defence he meant to adopt, and the advantage it offered over all others, he invited him to supply him, counsel, with as many particulars as he could summon to his memory concerning the basket-makers who had been camped near his house, as to any

movements or conversation which might be construed into a guilty intent. But the Shroff took but slight interest in his counsel's theory, and dismissed it with a shake of the head. Then suddenly, as though moved by an inspiration, he said thoughtfully and impressively: "Have Busappa's house searched."

At this his counsel was wroth. "It is worse than useless!" he exclaimed indignantly; "you will do yourself more harm than good by attempting to incriminate the father of the dead child. The idea is preposterous, wicked, and nobody will believe it. What, the father kill his own child?"

"Have his house searched, I say!" repeated the *sowkar* with added emphasis.

"It is useless I tell you," insisted his counsel.

"Never mind, have it searched. You are my counsel, will you do me this service? I will stand by, am willing to stand by, the consequences, whatever they be. Will you help me by doing this?"

So earnest was the prisoner that his counsel decided to at least make an effort to carry out his wishes in this direction, although he felt that it was merely a waste of valuable time. He, therefore, made a formal application to the

authorities for permission to have the house of Busappa Patel searched. Although this was at first demurred at, it was at length acceded to, and one day several police officers descended upon the bungalow of Busappa during the latter's absence, and instituted a thorough search through it. For some time their efforts went unrewarded, but at length their attention was attracted to a bundle of old wearing apparel in the corner of a small inner room. This they at once proceeded to turn over, and as they disturbed the clothes the faint chink of metal struck upon their ear. As they still further unfolded the garments several bangles fell out and dropped clattering to the floor. They were the missing ornaments of little Bhow!

This was indeed a most important discovery, and the Shroff's counsel, who had accompanied the officers, gazed incredulously at the tell-tale trinkets. But there was no doubt about it, they were the identical bangles for the possession of which the *sowkar* stood accused of the murder of their wearer. The police removed them to headquarters, and the arrest of Busappa followed soon after. This discovery, at one blow, knocked to pieces the case against the Shroff, who was released. Busappa, soon after arrest,

and in a flood of remorse and contrition, confessed the crime in full. It will interest the reader more if I, acting as interpreter, present the confession of Busappa in straightforward narrative form. It constitutes a remarkable story, and describes a deed which might be conceived and carried out alone by an Eastern mind and hand.

Shortly prior to the commission of the deed Busappa was in great financial difficulties, and, as already stated, deeply indebted to Dewchund. For years ill-luck would seem to have dogged his footsteps, and from bad his affairs grew to worse. These incessant worries evidently operated with demoralising effect upon his mind, and he brooded a great deal. He made repeated applications for advances to the Shroff, and when, as occasionally happened, that worthy felt compelled to refuse to comply with such demands, Busappa became violent and threatening. This, however, failed to move the capitalist one way or the other, and he usually treated the applicant on such occasions with indulgent contempt. He also pointed out to him that he was already indebted to him in a considerable amount, and was not inclined to allow it to increase. This enraged Busappa against him, and when the

latter discovered that his client had raised a sum of money elsewhere on his coming cotton crop, he became angry, and, for the first time, was threatening towards Busappa. This laid a speedy train for the consummation of the subsequent tragedy.

One day Busappa called upon Dewchund, and made yet another of his many applications for financial assistance. It was subsequent to the *sowkar* learning of the advance obtained elsewhere by his client, and he determined to give Busappa a piece of his mind. He informed him of what he had learned concerning his opening up business elsewhere, before settling with him, and told him that unless he settled matters with him within three days he would enter an action against him. This put Busappa into a state of high dudgeon, and, after a violent altercation of words, the cotton-grower flung out of the *sowkar's* house in a blazing temper. Although it is probable that the Shroff would not have taken action, the threat having been delivered in the heat of the moment, Busappa took it seriously, and brooded over it, seeing in it his complete undoing.

Late on the night of the third day after the interview, and the launching of the threat,

The People and the Police

Dewchund was seated in his shop, conning over his accounts, when there came a gentle tapping at the shutters. He cast a hasty glance towards the door, and wondered who his visitor could be at that time of the night. While he hesitated to reply to the summons the latter was repeated, this time somewhat louder, and more peremptory.

"Who is it?" demanded the Shroff, rising to his feet.

"Me—open!" replied the voice of Busappa, and the Shroff at once admitted him. He noticed that his visitor was very agitated and excited.

"What brings you here at this hour?" demanded the Shroff.

"I have come to pay you," said Busappa roughly; "what is the amount, eh? Let me have your demand in full, with interest up to date, for I want to be clear of you. Produce all the documents, and give me a discharge in full. At once, d'ye hear! Where are the papers?"

The Shroff was somewhat taken aback at this sudden and singular demand, but saw no reason why he should not comply with it at any rate, so produced his ledger, mortgage deeds, and other documents relating to his client's case,

and proceeded to make out an account. While he was engaged in this occupation Busappa moved impatiently about the apartment, and at length burst forth: "How much? Come, be quick, I want to pay you in full."

"Where is the money?" asked Dewchund, whose suspicion of his client was deepening.

"I tell you I have the money value!" savagely ejaculated Busappa.

"Where is it?" repeated the Shroff.

"Out there," said Busappa, and jerked his head in the direction of the back of the premises. "Come with me, and I will show you."

He led the way to the rear of the premises, the Shroff following and wondering. He went to an outhouse in which was a pile of fuel. The Shroff was carrying a lantern, and this his companion directed him to place upon the ground. He did so, becoming alarmed at Busappa's manner, which was increasing in aggressiveness.

"Where is the money?" impatiently exclaimed the Shroff. "What is the meaning of this mummery?"

Before he had time to utter another word Busappa had him by the throat, half throttling him, and pinning him to the ground. At the

same time he kicked some of the fuel away, revealing a dark object.

"There is your payment, you old fiend," he hissed; "there it is, the body of my boy, of little Bhow, I have brought it to you. Villain, you would sell me up, would you? I have been in your power long enough, now you are in mine." And he tightened his hold on the neck of the Shroff. "Listen, and I will tell you how I will pay you. Give me back every paper you hold of mine, and a full discharge of all indebtedness, or the murder of my child shall fall upon your shoulders. The fiend you have put into my heart has shown me my revenge. Nobody has seen me come here, nobody shall see me go hence. The child will be missing, the body found here, and you will be charged with murder for plunder, for the silver ornaments he always wore. They will readily believe it of the extortionist, the wrecker of homes. The time is short—which is it to be? Release for me or the rope for you? If you agree, raise your hand in token of assent."

The hand of the Shroff was raised, and Busappa loosened his hold. The *sowkar* was in a terrible condition of fright, and led the way into the shop with tottering footsteps. Here, with fingers

which trembled as though smitten with ague, he handed over to Busappa the mortgages and other documents which he held of his, together with a full discharge of all indebtedness. It then became necessary to dispose of the body of Bhow, which was taken to the *nullah*, and there buried, Busappa reckoning that the crime would be attributed to the basket-makers in the vicinity. The two men then separated, the Shroff returning to his shop, and Busappa to his house.

This is a circumstantial account of what happened in the *sowkar's* shop that night. The crime was committed just previously and was the work of a few moments, and unquestionably during a fit of mental aberration. Busappa had worked himself up into a state of frenzy, the child lay beside him on the sleeping mat, the idea came to him suddenly, and scarcely ere he knew what he was doing his hands were upon his child's throat, and the breath out of the child's body. After it was done, and he had secured the papers from the Shroff, he was seized with remorse, and his hatred of the Shroff became intensified. He determined to make him suffer all the same, and himself prompted the search of the *sowkar's* premises, and supported the charge made against him. The extraordinary folly of

not removing the bangles from his own house must be attributable to the wholly irresponsible state of his mind. It may be that he forgot their presence until it was too late to remove them, or he may have supposed it as well-nigh impossible that a search would be made of his own premises, and that the evidence against the Shroff was sufficient to convict him. However, it is certain that had he deposited the bangles in the house of Dewchund, and they had been found there, nothing on earth could have saved the *sowkar* from the gallows.

Busappa was duly tried and convicted, meeting his doom with a Spartan fortitude that was born of the deep remorse he felt at the crime he had committed.

CHAPTER X

THE POLICE "TRACKER"

ONE of the most interesting figures in Indian crime, in fact in the crime of any country, is the native detective or, as he is usually designated, "tracker." In all respects he is a remarkable individual. Through the medium of some astonishing instinct he is able to trace escaping criminals, perhaps weeks after the commission of a crime, and across vast tracks of territory. As in the case of a bloodhound he is taken to the scene of the crime, and "works" from that spot, and with no more assistance than the presence of faint indications of "spoor." Sir Edmund C. Cox, Deputy Inspector-General of Police for the Province of Sind, writing to me from Karachi, says: "Police trackers (like the poet) are born, not made. Tracking is an hereditary art, and I regret to say there is a general consensus of opinion that it is fast dying out. It has at all events very much deteriorated.

We select for the police such men as have a reputation for tracking, and who are willing to join; but it is difficult to get them, as they can earn as much out of the police as in it, without any disciplinary restrictions."

Mrs A. C. Wilson, in her book, "After Five Years in India," gives the following interesting particulars of a "test" which was applied to a tracker. The man was a cow-tracker, and was employed by natives in cases of cattle theft. In order to test the tracker's capabilities a cow was taken out of the camp, and brought back again by a circuitous route. The tracker, when the cow had been removed, was told that the cow was missing, and that he must find it. He was not given any sort of clue, but at once proceeded to carry out his task. With head bent and half-closed eyes, and without betraying the slightest hesitation, he followed some faint traces in the sand that were scarcely discernible to those who accompanied him, and watched his movements.

As he followed the tracks he kept up a running commentary, imparting his knowledge to the others as he acquired it. Thus he described the shape of the cow's feet, declared that the shoes worn by the man who had taken the animal were patched in two places, and that

at a certain point he had taken them off; that he had a flat foot with a long, big toe; that he was an old man, and belonged to a certain class accustomed to carry burdens. Passing through a field of grain the cow had, said the tracker, wished to stay and eat, but that she had been dragged away by the man and tethered to a tree. Having been working thus for about a quarter of an hour, he chuckled to himself and said: "Now, I could follow that cow to Lahore, and know her among a hundred." He was somewhat puzzled and amused when he discovered that the tracks led him back again to the camp, where the cow and the man were found. Every deduction that the tracker had made was correct.

These men have wonderfully keen eyesight, and perceive traces of a man's or an animal's flight that would be quite invisible to the eyes of a European. Not only so, but they are able to deduce from this evidence the most minute and faithful particulars of an individual's appearance and intentions. This insight is quite uncanny. I will next describe a case where a police-tracker employed his wonderful gift in order to save his own reputation.

In the village of Narrayengaum, at the foot of the mountains in the South Konkan, there

dwelt some years ago an old-fashioned Brahmin named Madho-rao. He was a kindly, courtly, native gentleman, about sixty years of age, who had received the village in which he resided as a gift, in recognition of some signal service his family had done years ago for the then Peshwa, and he had settled there in order to reclaim and repopulate the place. He was very proud of the peaceful character of the village, and boasted that a policeman had never visited it on duty. Shortly before the period at which we make his acquaintance his only brother had died, leaving behind a son, about twenty-five years of age, a rather objectionable specimen of the youthful Brahmin. Madho-rao also had a son, about the same age, named Vinayek, and these two youths caused the old Brahmin a good deal of worry and anxiety. The two had conspired to bring about a division of the village, but had not so far succeeded. Vinayek also occasionally absented himself from home for long periods, during which he travelled about the country as a religious mendicant. He would disappear suddenly and as suddenly reappear, and thereby hangs our tale.

Madho-rao had no wife, but a widowed sister lived with him, and performed for him

the offices of a housekeeper. She was a nice-spoken old lady, possessed of many homely good qualities. The village was one of great natural beauty, and was situated at the head of a gorge or ravine, and close by a mountain torrent, which descended 200 feet into a basin which it had itself formed below. The waters of the basin or pool were very deep, supposedly unfathomable, and was believed by the native mind to be haunted by a monster crocodile This pool concerns us closely. High up on a projecting ledge was the laterite-built village temple, the village itself nestling under the hill, and almost hidden from view by a dense thicket of bamboos, cocoa-nut trees, and rich, glossy-leaved mangoes. Madho-rao's house was situated near the torrent, and his nephew's about 100 yards lower down, each house being surrounded by a grove of betel-nut palms, one of the most graceful of Indian palms, and said to be "the straightest thing in nature." There were also, of course, the inevitable rice-fields, the whole forming a picture very beautiful to look upon.

Well, it appeared that Vinayek had been away from home rather longer than usual, and his father, growing anxious, had caused

enquiries to be made, and his description to be circulated, but to no effect. One day the police received an anonymous letter, which set forth in definite terms that Vinayek had been strangled by his father, and the body disposed of, with the aid of two farm-servants, named respectively Baloo and Bapoo, by being cast into the pool, where doubtless, the letter asserted, the body would be found, if the *mugger* (crocodile) had not devoured it. This missive was very cunningly worded, and the police were compelled to take some notice of it. The two men, Baloo and Bapoo, were questioned, and each gave a detailed and circumstantial account of the crime. Madho-rao's house was searched, and a bundle of clothing, including a pair of sandals, was found hidden away. Whereupon the police apprehended Madho-rao, his sister, and the two servants.

The pool was dragged, and a bundle of bones fished up. These were sealed and handed over to the civil surgeon. Things looked black for the prisoners. Vinayek was nowhere to be found, and the evidence of Baloo and Bapoo could in no way be shaken. The local police-officer who had charge of the case was much exercised in his mind about it, as the inability

to clear the matter up seemed to reflect very much upon his capabilities. But in the minds of the European officials, particularly in that of the Assistant Commissioner who had charge of the case, the case was not at all satisfactory. The evidence of Baloo and Bapoo seemed too good to be true; they had their story so "pat" that it suggested a prearrangement and a well-repeated lesson. True, the clothes found in the father's house were proved to have belonged to the missing man, but they were not hidden, but merely placed upon the top of a trunk where anybody might see them. Moreover, the civil surgeon reported that the bones found in the pool were those of a bullock. Poor Madho-rao had quite collapsed, the native fatalism having taken possession of his mind. All they could get from him was, "Jiwant hai, pun mee mèlya-shiwai nahi yènar." That is to say, "He is alive, but he won't come till I am dead."

Under all the circumstances, the Assistant determined to keep the case in abeyance as long as possible, to preserve the life of the prisoners, whom he felt convinced were innocent. Additional efforts were made to discover the whereabouts of Vinayek, but months went by and he

could not be found. The native officer already referred to, smarting under failure, asked for leave of absence as, said he, he was in ill health in consequence of the worry the case had given him. The necessary permission being granted, the conscious-stricken native officer disappeared from the scene of his labours. Time passed, and still he was mysteriously absent. When at length enquiries began to be made concerning him, he reappeared in a most dramatic manner. But I must not anticipate.

The authorities at headquarters were getting angry at the delay in bringing the case into court, and the Assistant received peremptory orders to at once send the prisoners up for trial. But the Assistant was not to be intimidated, and he meant to defend the right. A wordy warfare ensued in which the Assistant used every means in his power to stay the course of law in the service of justice and humanity. "How can you try these people—there is no *corpus delicti*?" Never mind, said stern and relentless routine, there is ample evidence for committal. The prisoners were confined in a lock-up, and the Assistant was, in pursuance of his duties, travelling round neighbouring districts. At last it seemed to him that the

prisoners were likely to be, independent of his authority, taken in hand by wrathful "judicial fossils in Bombay" (as he subsequently referred to them) and summarily dealt with, so he sent word that the prisoners be taken from the lock-up and brought to him at once, which was done. Thus he took them under his own wing, at the same time insisting that to commit them would be an illegal act. At that time the Assistant was stationed at a village called Viziadroog, having travelled thence on the previous night from Pimpulgaum. He had not been there long when a couple of policemen arrived hot-foot, as the Americans put it, in the village, one of whom presented a blood-red envelope to the Assistant, which was inscribed all over, "Zaroor-zaroor," that is to say, "Urgent, urgent." It should be explained that all serious communications concerning crimes in India are enclosed in bright-red envelopes. The letter within was from the native officer who left Narrayengaum suddenly—for his health. It was to the effect that the two policemen in question had with them a prisoner, and that prisoner was no other than the missing Vinayek!

It appeared that the officer had, with the aid of his gift for tracking, traced the young pseudo-

religious mendicant to his retreat far away in the Nizam's territory, and had sent him along in charge of the two police constables. Needless to say, the Assistant was much gratified thereat, and proceeded to at once hold a court, in order to commit the case to the sessions. This he did under a large banian tree in a fort, having first arranged a confrontation between Vinayek and the prisoners. The Assistant sat at a table, and the prisoners were brought before him, he informing Madho-rao that he was about to commit him, but that he believed in his innocence. "He *is* alive, but he has killed me," was all poor Madho-rao could say. The old lady squatted down, covering her face with her *saree*, or dress. Then, at a given signal, Vinayek was quietly brought forward, the Assistant remarking to Madho-rao: "God is great! Look behind you, Baba!" He turned, saw his son, and fell insensible to the ground. The old lady went off into hysterics.

The case was duly committed, but the prisoners now were Vinayek, Baloo and Bapoo. The first-named made a full confession, the plot having been concocted, he declared, in order to get possession of his father's property. He, disguised, betook himself to the Moglai, in the Nizam's

dominion, and his cousin, whose name was Luxmanrao, wrote the anonymous letter. Baloo and Bapoo were well coached in their parts, and the clothes and bones were "planted." Luxmanrao was arrested, but, unfortunate to relate, through lack of evidence, he was not convicted. He went on a pilgrimage to Benares, where he died. Vinayek was sentenced to seven years', and Baloo and Bapoo to three years' each, with hard labour.

The tracker was suitably rewarded and promoted, he eventually dying a police inspector. He confessed that when he departed on his mission he had not the slightest clue, but he was determined to find Vinayek, or never again return to service. The first clue he obtained was at Pandharpur, and thence he followed the trail for weeks, over hundreds of miles of territory, until at length he ran his quarry to earth. His adventures on the way would, in themselves, constitute a not uninteresting book, but they cannot, of course, be given here.

PART II

CRIMES AND CRIMINALS

CHAPTER XI

THE POISONER

THUGEE no longer exists in India in any organised form, it having been suppressed some years ago. Some people imagine, and it has been stated, that the Thug has been converted into the poisoner, and that the repression of one crime has given rise to the other. This, however, is not so, for in their methods the two crimes are quite distinct. Thugee was formerly carried out by organised gangs, which consisted of "inveiglers," "garrotters," and "grave-diggers." There was also always a "chief." They had a language, or slang, of their own, and among the members of the terrible brotherhood of crime there existed a universal system of freemasonry. The victim being selected, an "inveigler" would proceed to ingratiate himself into his good

graces, inspire his confidence, and lull his suspicions. In the meantime, the "grave-diggers" would be busy preparing the victim's last resting-place, the "garrotter" waiting at an appointed place for the unsuspecting traveller, and the "chief" keeping a keen eye on the whole proceedings. The "garrotter" was an adept at his villainous work, his weapon being merely a handkerchief. At a given signal he would noiselessly step up behind the victim, deftly whip the handkerchief round his neck, give it a sudden twist with his knuckles, a sharp wrench, and all was over. Then the body having been rifled was deposited in the newly-made grave, which was at once filled in. Thousands of people thus "mysteriously disappeared."

Now the poisoner nearly always works alone, and is not a member of any kind of organisation. True, he worms himself into the confidence of his roadside victim, but there his resemblance to the Thug ceases. The Indian "professional poisoner," as he is termed, is a most subtle and dangerous criminal. He is an exceedingly clever actor, and a dissembler of a superlative order. He carries out his nefarious work under a variety of disguises, not

necessarily always killing his victim. It is sufficient for his purpose sometimes to merely render him unconscious. His methods are manifold, and are respectively appropriate to the particular disguise which he adopts. For instance, he may be a respectable-looking artisan, with a wife and family—the latter probably not his own—who hires a cart and subsequently drugs the driver and makes off with the animals and the vehicle, which he disposes of. This kind of thing he carries on at intervals during a lengthy "tour." Then there is the "pious" poisoner, in priestly garb, posing as an ascetic, whose poison is contained in "consecrated" food; he also makes poisoned offerings at temples, and the genuine priests who partake of them are his victims. There is the "hail-fellow-well-met," who accosts unsuspecting travellers on the road, and invites them to refreshment which is deftly "doctored"; the charitable individual who offers to draw drinking water from a well for thirsty women, and unperceived drops a "little something" into it, which is not calculated to improve its quality as a beverage; the highly-respectable young gentleman who scrapes an acquaintance with young women possessed of jewellery, stupefies them

with *betel*, and makes off with their trinkets; and the cook who engages himself to a family, and prostrates all its members by his "carefully-prepared" dishes, and clears out with all their portable valuables. The Indian poisoner is not necessarily a poisoner only, for he may be also a butcher or a barber, or even a policeman.

Now the Indian poisoner is a criminal most difficult to legislate for, inasmuch as his deadly agents are always ready to his hand. Mineral poisons may be "scheduled" and protected, but vegetable poisons grow by the wayside, and are easily accessible. The poison mostly used is one obtained from the seeds of a plant called *dhatura*, which is occasionally mixed with *bhang* —Indian hemp—or opium. Mineral poisons are very rarely resorted to. The poison is introduced into all kinds of food and drink, and at all times, and in various places — a quiet jungly spot, a temple, a well, a brothel, a private house, or even a railway station.

In the ranks of Indian poisoners have figured some portentous criminals. One of the most notorious was a criminal named Sharafudin, the story of whose career seems scarcely credible. He started as a policeman in the Upper Provinces, but, committing some minor offence,

he got sent to prison. Here he made the acquaintance of a poisoner named Laljee, from whom he learned the horrible trade. When the two men left prison they "operated" as poisoners in company, until, a dispute arising, they separated, Sharafudin contriving to get back into the ranks of the police force! But, again becoming insubordinate, he was dismissed. In the meantime his whilom partner, Laljee, had been arrested and once more consigned to prison for a long period. Sharafudin thereupon took possession of Laljee's wife and two children, and with their aid continued his career in the art of poisoning. For years he enjoyed an immunity from detection, when one of his paramours, considering herself slighted or neglected, betrayed the man to the police. A large reward was offered for his apprehension, but for a considerable time Sharafudin managed to elude the police, but eventually was drugged and given over to the police by one of his own confederates. He subsequently made a full confession, in which he estimated that his victims ran into hundreds. He was hanged at Amritsur, in the Punjaub.

In the year 1872 a remarkable conspiracy to poison on wholesale lines was brought to

light at Bombay. In a house called "Prospect Lodge," in the Grant Road, dwelt Mr De Ga, an accountant of the Bank of Bombay, his wife and family. One day a *peon*, or native messenger, called at the house and left a packet of confectionery, which he said had been sent by a relation of Mr De Ga. That night Mr De Ga, his wife, and his servants, having partaken of the confectionery, were seized with a mysterious illness. It was soon after discovered that a relation of theirs, a Mr A. De Ga, and his wife, to whom they had sent a portion of the confectionery, had also been seized with sickness, and soon after had died. Also a Mr J. D. Pereira (managing clerk to Messrs Dallas & Lynch, solicitors), a friend of the De Gas, and his mother had also fallen victims to the mysterious illness.

The case was placed in the hands of Mir Abdul Ali, the head of the Bombay detective force, who instituted exhaustive enquiries into the strange occurrence. For some time his efforts proved futile, until at length he managed to trace the whereabouts of the messenger who had delivered the confectionery at "Prospect House." The discovery, however, was not of much assistance to him, inasmuch as the luck-

less man had been murdered and his body buried in a *nullah*. It was there the detective found him. Evidently he had been a "tool" in the hands of the real criminal, who had adopted this summary method of silencing a possible witness against himself. It was clear they had a desperate and unscrupulous man to deal with.

For some time no further light was thrown on the affair, when in December Abdul Ali received a visit from a man named Ali Mahomed Borah, who made a sensational statement. He said he was a friend of a Parsee solicitor named Pestonji Dinshaw, who had consulted him as to the best method of "removing" two objectionable people, asking him if he knew of anybody who, for a consideration, would undertake the business. He, Borah, had suggested a fakir named Khakisha, who lived in a bungalow a little way out of the town, in a thoroughfare known as Third Kamatipura Lane. On the following night, he told the detective, he was to introduce Dinshaw and a confederate named Saccaram Raghoba to the fakir, when the business would be discussed. Questioned as to why he had betrayed his "friend" in this manner, the informer replied that he was not

exactly a friend, but only an acquaintance. He considered it his duty, he added, virtuously, to inform the authorities, and so prevent the consummation of a heinous crime.

It was at length arranged that the informer should introduce the police into the bungalow before the meeting took place, so that they might overhear all that transpired. Accordingly, on the night in question, the detective and his subordinates concealed themselves in the bungalow—the fakir having been induced to leave it for a time on some pretext or another—and waited the advent of the visitors. They had not long to wait. Soon the solicitor, the fakir, the informer, and others entered the adjoining apartment, which was indifferently lighted by a small lamp. The police listened intently.

"What service is it you desire of me?" asked the fakir solemnly.

"I am informed," said another voice—that of the solicitor—"that you have the power to visit death upon whomsoever you choose. There are certain persons whom it is expedient to my interests should disappear. Does your power go so far? I am willing to pay handsomely for such service."

"What are these people," said the old man, after a pause, "whom you wish removed?"

"They are *Kristees*" (Christians).

"Their names?"

"De Ga."

"It must be done by sorcery," said Dinshaw.

"Poison is offensive to the *sheth*" (solicitor), said another.

"Cannot you visit them with a fatal illness?" asked Dinshaw eagerly. "I do not like poison, as my friend says. It is not to be relied on, is dangerous to those who seek its aid, and sometimes miscarries in its purpose. It must be done by sorcery, old man. Look here, I will make a proposal to you. On the day that these people fall sick I will give you five hundred rupees; and if they are dead within three days, I will give you a further two thousand rupees. What say you?"

"I must consult my book of divination," said the old man; "and it is also necessary that I should see these people."

At this stage the meeting was rudely broken up by the police, who emerged precipitately from their hiding-place and took the whole lot into custody. The informer only was allowed to escape. Subsequent investigation revealed

the following facts. De Ga had taken proceedings against Dinshaw, as executor for his wife's property, in order to remove the business from his hands. De Ga's wife had formerly been Rose Mary Stephens, and her father had bequeathed property to her. The terms of the will directed that she should inherit the property in the event either of her coming of age or marrying. The solicitor, Dinshaw, strongly objected to having the business taken out of his hands, and he had some good reasons for his objection. The plaint was filed in October 1872, and a rule granted on 4th November. The solicitor tried to compromise, and offered to make over two thousand rupees in cash, and a house of the value of eight thousand rupees in full settlement, but this was declined by the De Gas. Then Dinshaw made a further offer to pay twelve thousand rupees and the house aforesaid in a month from 5th December, and this was accepted.

In the meantime it was clear that the villainous Dinshaw had endeavoured to encompass the deaths of the legatees, in order to be rid of his responsibility to find the money. He had, as his worthy Western brethren not infrequently do, misappropriated the property entrusted to

him. Curiously enough, his first attempt to destroy his former clients—conceived with fiendish ingenuity so as to throw suspicion upon a relation of the intended victims—had miscarried on account of the De Gas' generosity, which had saved their lives, but unhappily had been the cause of the deaths of those to whom they had extended their generosity. It will be noted that the final settlement was to be made one month from 5th December, and it was on the 9th of that month that Borah made his communication to the police.

The case was tried before Mr Justice Bayley, and caused considerable sensation. The solicitor and his confederates were charged with conspiracy, and on this count they were each sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment. The fakir could not be charged with any offence as he had not consented to anything, so he was eventually released.

CHAPTER XII

THE FORGER

THE Oriental "penman," as the forger is sometimes called, is in no way behind that criminal in the West. Indeed, I am not at all sure that a comparative judgment of the work of the two would not result in a "favourable" verdict for the Eastern criminal. India has, in fact, been referred to, by those best qualified to express an opinion on the subject, as a "land of forgers." The crime prevails almost exclusively among the better or more educated classes of the community, the higher castes, particularly among the wily Brahmins. The internal economy of the country, the many and varied changes which have from time to time taken place in the individual ownership of the land, the consequent flood of legislation and litigation, and the many changes in the stamp laws, have all constituted a fruitful soil in which to cultivate the crime of forgery. Sometimes

a forgery will come to light during the course of a civil action, or an organised system of forgery may be revealed quite by accident.

About 1860 an Act was passed to prevent the filing of suits for the recovery of money on unstamped bonds after a certain date. Although this Act does not seem to have been very industriously enforced, it was instrumental in revealing the existent system of organised forgery. The judge of a certain district, an accomplished linguist and student of native character, was about this time much struck with the large number of suits filed on unstamped bonds for small sums in a subdivision of his district. The cases so tried invariably came before the judge on appeal, the defendant always being the appellant. The most remarkable feature about these cases, which came along in shoals, was that they were always clear against the defendants, whose only plea was that the document in question was a forgery. This was later further complicated by the appellants becoming the original plaintiffs, they having been non-suited by the production of receipts or proofs of repayment, which they in turn declared to be forgeries.

This curious legal imbroglio impelled the

judge to look closely into the various cases, with the result that his uneasiness was still further increased. It was a pregnant fact that in all the cases the plaintiff was one of some eighteen money-lenders, that precisely the same *vakils* (solicitors) were always employed in the lower court, and that two well-known rival *vakils* were invariably employed in the same court for the defendants. Having thus formed some very grave suspicions, the judge gave expression to them before the authorities, and an official enquiry was at once instituted. The police officials were faced with a somewhat difficult problem, for they had nothing more substantial to go upon than the judge's suspicions. They are therefore not to be considered blameworthy for adopting measures not altogether regular. They hung about the sub-judge's court, and "pumped" as much as possible the hangers-on thereof. The result of this subtlety was to convince them that the head of the conspiracy was one of the money-lending plaintiffs. But how to "fix" him, how to find evidence against him? They felt confident that a search of his house would prove useful, and this they contrived to do unsuspectingly and unexpectedly. The result was most gratifying.

The first thing they came upon was a bundle, wrapped in a *rúmál*, which seemed to invite them to a close inspection. It was in very truth a most interesting article, for in it was a kind of rough diary, the contents of which formed an astonishing indictment in itself! In it was inscribed a list of persons who had been, or who were to be, victimised. It was a document similar to that which is invariably possessed by the begging-letter impostor of this country. It furnished full particulars of the financial standing of the victims, and, where a son was to be plundered on the bond of his deceased father, the name and date of the death of that parent. There was a voluminous correspondence from various members of the gang of swindlers, and, most remarkable of all, letters from the *vakils* who they had employed to back up their frauds. (Oh, these solicitors!) It appeared that the conspiracy becoming known to other *vakils*, the latter proceeded to institute, as it were, a rival conspiracy, by defending the victims with forged receipts! What think you now, ye wise and learned ones of the West, of the poor benighted "heathens" of the East?

There was also found a large quantity of paper used in manufacturing the forged documents.

This led to a "departmental enquiry," the *vakils* concerned having their *sanads* (licences to practise) cancelled, and the *moonsiff*, or sub-judge, who was a native, was cashiered as an incapable old fool. The eighteen money-lenders were, of course, prosecuted. The way these incomparable rogues worked was as follows. They all lived in different villages, and periodically they held a kind of "committee meeting," when it was decided who should be proceeded against, suitable paper selected, and the forged bonds drawn up. Their victims being mostly illiterate men, they experienced little difficulty about the signature, which was usually a mere "mark." The signatures of two bogus witnesses to the loan were appended, and these same witnesses subsequently supported or confirmed their signatures in the witness-box. Sometimes the document would be antedated, the paper accordingly wearing an appearance of age. Altogether the unfortunate victim found it quite futile to resist the claim. When the rival *vakils* came into the arena they hit upon the expedient, as I have already intimated, of making capital out of the conspiracy by defending the defendants, and putting in fictitious receipts, which bore the forged signatures of some of the forgers. And

as the fraudulent claimants had employed bogus witnesses to confirm the claim, so the *vakils* put bogus witnesses into the box to offer rebutting evidence, and support a visionary theory of repayment. It was simply fraud *versus* fraud, Greek and Greek, battledore and shuttlecock, with the luckless victim as the missile. You may search the criminal archives of the West in vain for a crime so daring, so subtle, so widespread, so skilful, and at the same time so infamous! This gang have very fittingly been handed down in trustworthy chronicles as the "wily eighteen."

Here is another case of forgery in the East which, for longevity, easily beats anything of the kind to be found in the West. One morning, a few years ago, a police inspector from Calcutta presented himself at the bungalow of a commissioner in Lucknow, and showed him two Government Court fee stamps, each of the value of one hundred rupees, which he declared to be forgeries. The stamps, it appeared, had been taken to a collector's office in Calcutta by a man who endeavoured to obtain their value in cash. Asked as to how he came into possession of them, he said he won them from a stranger at cards. The collector was suspicious concerning them, so he told the man to call again on the

following day for the money, and promptly sent the stamps to the Commissioner of Stamps, who at once pronounced them forgeries. When the man called next day he was taken into custody; but, curiously enough, he was enabled to confirm his story by pointing out the man from whom he received the stamp. This man was found to be a native of Lucknow, hence the advent of the inspector in that town.

Upon the strength of this information the commissioner, accompanied by the inspector, during that and the following day, pursued a rigorous investigation in the town, visiting the various courts and offices, with the result that they discovered on the files forged one-hundred-rupee stamps to the aggregate value of three *lacs* of rupees! It was also made clear that these forgeries had emanated from the Government Stamp Department itself, and had been issuing and circulating over a period of twenty years.

It is necessary that the reader should understand how the Stamp Department in India is conducted, and, put briefly, it is as follows. The stamps are kept in packets, and as they are received they are counted by the Treasury officer, entered in registers, and deposited in

a strong room under double lock. As the stamps are required for sale to the public they are counted and given out by the Treasury officer, who, at the close of every day, checks the day's records. Once a month the registers are examined by the collector of the district, and the stock inspected. No stamps of a higher value than ten rupees are sold anywhere but at the Government Treasury. Suppose a man wishes to buy stamps to the value of a hundred rupees. He will present himself at the Treasury Office and pay in that amount of money, receiving a receipt and an order on the treasurer's assistant in another part of the building for the delivery of the stamps in question—that is to say, stamps to the value of the money paid in, whatever that may be. Thus collusion is sought to be avoided.

It was, therefore, quite clear to the authorities that a Treasury official must be in league with the forger or forgers, and this proved to be the case. The forger turned out to be a notorious criminal named Hossein Bux, who made and supplied the forged stamps to his confederate, the treasurer's assistant. The frauds were perpetrated in the following manner. When anybody applied for a stamp or stamps the

assistant gave the customer forged stamps to an equivalent amount. He then proceeded to take from his stock genuine stamps for small amounts, aggregating to the amount of the forged stamps given out, entering them in the register as sold, but appropriating them to his own and his accomplice's use. Thus, when at the end of the day it came to balancing up, his accounts were quite correct, the amount represented by the unloading of the forgeries appearing in the register as sales of smaller stamps which he had purloined. Again we see the abundant simplicity of the Eastern mind!

The genuine and stolen stamps were sold to stamp vendors at a discount of 5 per cent., the balance being divided between the two principal rogues. I say principal rogues, because all the stamp vendors who purchased the plunder had a guilty knowledge of the crime. These confederates were spread about in various parts, in Lucknow, Benares, Allahabad, Bareilly, and half over the North-Western Provinces and Oudh. The man who paid a gambling debt with a forged stamp in Calcutta was a confederate, trying to open up a market in Bengal. The forger, Hossein Bux, in the end confessed, and further showed the authorities how he accomplished his

forgeries. It was simplicity itself. He pasted the original stamp on a piece of glass, placing over it some tracing paper, on which he copied the design; he then cut away the tracing, wetted the back of it, and scratched in the water-mark with a native nail-paring implement called *nakhungiri.* He then proceeded to colour it with ordinary bazaar ingredients, finishing it off by brushing liquid gum over the back with a camel's-hair brush. The colours he used were made in the following manner: — A mixture of shisham charcoal, lamp-black, and varnish constituted black; indigo and yellow orpiment (hartal) mixed with varnish made green; blue was indigo mixed with varnish, and yellow, yellow orpiment mixed with varnish. The lamp-black was obtained by burning oil. The varnish used as a solvent gave the colours firmness and gloss.

One day Hossein Bux was confronted with the Government Commissioner of Stamps, whom he asked how much money he was paid. The Commissioner replied: "Two thousand rupees a month." At this Hossein Bux expressed some surprise and not a little disgust, remarking: "And you don't know a forged stamp when you see it!" He further made a sporting offer

to do the Commissioner's work for the sum, and would point out every forged stamp there was in existence, and show how it was done. His services were not enlisted, though, in that capacity, although they were in another, for, with seventeen confederates, he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

It forms a striking commentary on crime in the East to learn that this Hossein Bux was, from an early age, systematically trained in the art of forgery. He was first apprenticed to a watchmaker in order to learn mechanism, was then placed with a photographer to acquire a knowledge of chemicals, also to enable him to photograph deeds, seals, etc., which he might be called upon to forge. So that he might possess a good knowledge of how to mix colours, he was placed under an Italian artist at the King of Oudh's Court. Thus equipped he set up as a professional forger on his own account, and for twenty long years lived by fraud on the fat of the land.

Such are some of the blessings of education!

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONFIDENCE-TRICKSTER

ONE of the most subtle, artistic, painstaking, and relentless wrongdoers is the Oriental criminal who perpetrates fraud by means of the confidence trick. In the West this crime is usually surrounded with sordid and trumpery conditions, not infrequently being associated with public-houses, but in the East it is raised to the level of a fine art. For patience, perseverance, and dissimulation, the Indian confidence-trickster is head and shoulders above any other criminal anywhere to be found. He plays upon the cardinal faults of his fellow-creatures as a harpist manipulates the strings of his instrument. Credulity, avarice, ignorance, covetousness, all render their respective measures in the melody of his scheme. Nothing daunts him, he is callous to a degree. He has no sort of consideration for anybody but himself, not even for his confederates. He is a thoroughly hardened

and instinctive scoundrel. He figures largely in the official archives of the Indian criminal courts, the history of some of his exploits forming quite fascinating narratives. Two characteristic samples of his work I propose now to describe, devoting considerable space thereto, for they are well worth the telling. I shall throw them into story form, as I did in the case of Malek Chand, and for the same reasons. The first one we will call,

The Parsee and the Holy Man.

It was early on a glorious summer's morning, and very few persons were to be seen about on the beach at Chowpati, Bombay, so that at first very little notice was taken of a tall man of venerable aspect, who made his way slowly and with dignified step down to the seashore. He had a long, grey beard, was dressed in ample flowing robes, and carried with him a roll of carpet. Placing this upon the sand, the patriarch knelt down, turned his face towards Mecca, and seemed to engage in earnest prayer. Having concluded his devotions, he rose to his feet, gathered up his carpet, and walked meditatively away. The few people who were passing

watched him with evident interest, following his slowly retreating form with their eyes until the aged man was out of sight.

As evening drew down, and the sun was setting in a flood of golden glory, the venerable worshipper was again seen to approach the seashore, and once more engage in earnest prayer. This time he was the cynosure of many eyes, but was too deeply immersed in his devotions to be cognisant of the attention he attracted. As in the morning, he arose to his feet, gathered up his carpet, and moved away with majestic stride, apparently absorbed in thought. Thereupon, morning and evening, regularly at the same hour, did the stranger put in an appearance on the seashore of Chowpati, and the people, watching him at his devotions with respectful awe, began to wonder who he could be.

Among those who had been attracted by the visits of the holy man to the beach was a Parsee gentleman, whose curiosity concerning the venerable stranger was so deep that he came every morn and eventide to the shore just to watch for the coming and going of the mysterious devotee. One morning the Parsee noticed several other persons standing near, who,

like himself, appeared to be attracted by the presence of the patriarch, and he determined to make enquiries of one of their number. Accordingly he approached a man who stood at a respectful distance regarding the bowed figure of the old man, who was kneeling in his customary attitude.

"A singular man, is he not?" whispered the Parsee.

For reply he received a glance of mild reproach from the stranger, who, finger upon lip, entreated silence. At this the Parsee felt somewhat discomposed, and held his peace. The silence was at length broken by the stranger himself.

"A wonderful man!" said he in an impressive undertone; and the Parsee inclined his head in mute acquiescence. After a pause the Parsee ventured to put the question which was uppermost in his mind.

"Can you inform me who he is?" he enquired, almost anxiously.

The stranger looked round with astonishment.

"Who he is?" he repeated, in a tone of incredulity. "Do you not know? Impossible! You must surely have heard of the great Pir Syed, the saint, the holiest of the holy? No?

You amaze me! I thought such a great man would be known to most people athirst for knowledge. He is a deeply interesting personage, I can assure you, and one who has conferred untold blessings on the needy and suffering. He is a saint upon earth, who lives but for charity and for the righteous pleasure of helping his fellow-creatures; a deeply interesting individual, who has the control of fabulous wealth, all of which he devotes to the uplifting of the lowly and the suffering. A strange man, too—a wanderer over the face of the earth, a pilgrim of love, whom nobody meets but to bless. I am much surprised that you have not heard of him."

The stranger appeared hurt at the Parsee's ignorance, whereupon the enquirer exhibited symptoms of confusion and embarrassment.

"I should like to speak with such a great man, if I might," he stammered.

"Speak with him!" exclaimed the stranger, in tones of consternation. "Speak with the holy man! I am afraid that can never be. He is very reserved, communes much with himself, and rarely addresses a fellow-creature unless he has some special and momentous communication to make. In fact, he scarcely seems of this

world at all, having no interest in it beyond the disposition in charity of his boundless wealth, as I have intimated."

"I should much like to know him," said the Parsee, regarding the still kneeling figure earnestly, but the stranger shook his head doubtingly.

"You see," said he, "you are not of his creed; but follow me—we will approach nearer. Walk slowly and quietly lest we disturb him. I know the holy man slightly, but I cannot promise that he will speak with you. Ah! he rises; stand here."

The Pir (saint) rose slowly to his feet, and stood for a few moments apparently plunged in deepest abstraction.

"If we keep here," whispered the stranger to the Parsee, "he may notice us as he passes."

At this juncture a man of somewhat needy appearance approached from the opposite direction, and bowing low before the holy man delivered himself as follows, his words being plainly audible to the watchers: "O most mighty Pir, and blessed Saint Syed Magrabi, thy servant desires humbly to thank thee for thy generous bounty and timely aid. The ten thousand rupees thou didst bestow on me saved

me from utter ruin, and the prayers of gratitude of one whose thankfulness can never be sufficient will ever be thine. O most bountiful and blessed Pir, think not that thy servant is unmindful or avaricious, or that he would be guilty of making undue calls upon thy boundless charity and goodness of heart, for that can never be; but in the fullness of his gratitude, and his great appreciation of thy power and will to relieve the sorely oppressed, he has ventured to again approach you to crave your further assistance. I have a daughter, the light of my eye, the joy of my life, and she would be wedded to a son of our blessed faith. But, alas! I have not the wherewithal to fittingly countenance this desirable union, and the heart of a father is heavy and oppressed thereat. The sum requisite will not, I am confident, seem large in thy sight, being, indeed, but five thousand rupees. With such an amount in my possession I could make my sweet child happy, and so thy grateful and humble servant craves the further assistance of the thrice-blessed Pir." Thereupon the needy one bent low in abject supplication.

The holy man laid his hand gently upon the bowed head before him, and said gravely: "Have no fears, thy wish shall be gratified.

Come to my dwelling one hour after the set of sun this eventide and the money shall be thine." With this he waved his hand, and the applicant, salaaming low, moved away.

The Parsee witnessed this little incident with the deepest interest. Once or twice he glanced enquiringly towards his companion, who, with a hardly perceptible gesture, entreated silence and attention.

Scarcely had the figure of the needy pilgrim receded in the distance ere another aged man approached, bowing low to the Pir, who welcomed him with a warm and kindly smile. The suppliant was well stricken in years, and when he spoke his tones were weak and faltering, albeit there was no hesitancy in his earnestness.

"O most sacred and reverend Pir, whose works are even as mighty as those of Mahommed the Prophet," he said, "I did happily discover the treasure thou wert bountiful enough to tell me of, and thy servant would humbly tender thee his heartfelt thanks for thy great and sorely-needed aid. But it is more, much more, than would have sufficed to relieve me of my pressing embarrassments and my embittering poverty.

O holy man, I thank thee!" And he prostrated himself at the feet of the Pir.

The latter, making a gesture of deprecation, replied as follows: "Go, thou, but tell no man; be careful of that — 'tis my command. With the treasure in thy possession thou and thy family may live in comfort. But heed me carefully and follow my precepts faithfully. Spend it not on frivolities and vanities, but in charity, relieving the suffering, exalting the lowly, and bringing joy to the hearts of the oppressed. Fail not on peril of my wrath! Go; peace be with you." And the holy man dismissed the pilgrim, who salaamed and retreated.

"Wonderful, is it not?" said the Parsee, under his breath.

"Yes," replied the stranger, "it is indeed wonderful. His slave is the King of the Genii, who reveals to him the hiding-places of the hidden treasure. He has control over vast sums of money, and frequently gives away fortunes. Yes, he is a man worth knowing; but his acquaintance is not easy to make."

Meanwhile the Pir was slowly moving towards the Parsee and the stranger, and the latter cautioned his companion to be prepared to

speak to the holy man, should the latter deign to address him.

As the Pir caught sight of the excited Parsee standing timidly before him, he suddenly stopped, gazed steadfastly at him, and pressed his hand to his forehead. Then he looked enquiringly at him, shook his head sadly, and walked away. The Parsee's companion, after briefly indicating his belief that the Parsee would not easily obtain an audience, also went about his business. The Parsee, needless to say, was disappointed and puzzled, but that night he formed a resolution. Come what might, he determined that on the morrow he would boldly address himself to the holy man on the beach. Accordingly, the following morning he made his way to the sea-shore, and seeing the Pir in his accustomed devotional attitude, approached him and stood quietly by his side. When the Pir had concluded his prayers he rose to his feet, turned round, and, catching sight of the Parsee, started back in consternation.

"At last!" he exclaimed, "at last I have found thee, O thou descendant of Noshirvan and Darius! Thou wert revealed to me in a vision, a blessed vision, and I have since been waiting and longing to meet thee in the flesh.

Know that thou hast been selected as a fitting instrument to benefit the deserving suffering of mankind. Thou, O son of the immortal Noshirvan and Darius, art heir to great riches, to treasure of untold worth, which lies hidden in the bowels of the earth, but which is reserved for thee in order that thou mayest do good on earth. Yes; all has been revealed to me, and I am the appointed agent through whom the hiding-place of the treasure is to be made known. Thou wilt own many ships whose passing shall be fleet as the wind, and in which thou shalt carry pilgrims to Mecca, where is the tomb of the great Prophet. It is I, Saint Syed Magrabi, that tell thee this. It is well, it is blessed! Amen! Amen! Amen!" And falling upon his knees, the Pir bowed thrice towards Mecca.

The Parsee looked on bewildered, though he was conscious of an undercurrent of satisfaction.

"Art willing to follow me?" asked the Pir; then, ere the Parsee had time to reply, he added: "To-night at sunset meet me here." With that he took up his carpet and strode away.

Secretly gratified, the Parsee came to the seashore at the hour appointed, and there, as arranged, met the Pir. The latter spoke not

a word, but imperiously beckoned the native to follow him. He led the way across the neighbouring railway level, along Mathew Road, into Breach Candy Road, and thence to Grant Road, where the holy man entered a bungalow, signing to the Parsee to follow him. The latter, now filled with anticipation and expectation, did so, passing through a dimly-lighted apartment into an inner room, which was well-nigh in darkness. The only light in the apartment was a sickly yellow gleam which emanated from two small *samai*, or lamp-stands. In the gloom the awestruck Parsee saw mysterious cloaked figures moving noiselessly hither and thither, the faces being masked. The Pir walked to the lamp-stands and stood meditatively for a few moments within the radius of the light, which gave his venerable-looking face a weird and ghostly pallor. Then, turning to the Parsee, he exclaimed in a sepulchral voice: "Son of Noshirvan, come no further before removing thy shoes, for this is holy ground!"

The Parsee tremblingly obeyed, whereupon the Pir handed him a roll of cloth.

"Stand upon this," said he, "or the King of the Genii may destroy thee. I am now about

to summon the Genie to our presence, in order that he may reveal the abiding-place of the hidden treasure. To all my invocations, O son of Noshirvan, do thou salaam and exclaim, 'Amen!'"

The patriarch next unrolled a larger piece of carpet, and placed it on the ground between the two lights, leaving a space between his own carpet and that of the Parsee. There was no floor to the apartment, nothing but the bare ground.

"Hassan," called the Pir, "perform the task!"

Promptly a man emerged from the gloom, bearing in his hand a basin. The holy man threw off his outer garments, poured perfume into the basin from a phial in his hand, and then indulged in a few ablutions. From the basin there arose a pleasant odour, which permeated the surrounding atmosphere. The Parsee, standing in the middle of his carpet, began to tremble with excitement.

"Hassan, dig!" exclaimed the Pir suddenly.

Hassan, having dabbled his fingers in the perfumed water produced a spade, and proceeded in the semi-darkness to excavate the ground. He had not, however, thrown up more than two or three spadefuls of earth, when he suddenly

ceased work and fell back with a cry, blood trickling from his mouth.

"O master," he exclaimed, "I cannot dig; there are fearful demons threatening me and bidding me stay my hand! They are terrible creatures, with flames issuing from their mouths, and they come from all directions. Save me! Save me!"

At this the holy man made many mysterious passes with his hands, and muttered rapidly in Arabic. The Parsee, although he could not understand the latter, salaamed profusely and exclaimed, "Amen!" as he had been bidden, his voice betraying his agitation.

The effect of the patriarch's invocation or incantation appeared to be beneficial, for presently Hassan, with a sigh of relief, exclaimed, "The demons fly away!" The Pir then made circles with his finger round the hole, and apparently succeeded in exorcising the demons, for Hassan resumed his digging. He had not got far with it, however, when he again fell back, exclaiming: "O master, there are more demons and serpents! O great Pir, save me; they attack me!"

The Pir uttered further invocations in Arabic, and, although the Parsee was trembling with terror, he still responded with a quavering

"'O MASTER,' HE EXCLAIMED, 'I CANNOT DIG.'"

"Amen!" Perceiving his alarm, the Pir proceeded to reassure him, stating that he need have no fear while he remained on the carpet, as that was a protection against the evil influence of the spirits. Hassan declared that he saw demons in hundreds, but was assured by the Pir that they would not harm him. Apparently convinced, the man resumed his digging, until the hole assumed considerable depth, and he became exhausted. As he paused to take breath, there arose from the hole, slowly and silently, as though by its own volition, a closed copper vessel. The Pir watched it intently, and when at length it became stationary, he made passes of a mysterious and elaborate kind in the air above it, the while he muttered an incantation in Arabic. Then, stooping, he removed the lid from the copper receptacle. To the horror of the Parsee, watching with staring eyes, there emerged from the interior a cobra, which, with hood expanded, reared its vicious-looking head, writhing and wriggling about the mouth of the pot, and thrusting forth its forked tongue. The Parsee stood spellbound, while the Pir, after describing several circles round the head of the snake with his finger, boldly plunged his hand into the copper vase

and drew forth several gold pieces. These he handed to the Parsee.

"Take these, my son," said he; "they are gold mohurs, and are earnest of the millions that will soon be thine, shouldst thou follow out thy instructions. Within the snake thou seest lies the spirit of the Genie. He can take any shape of man, or animal, or reptile that his master may dictate or command, and the reason that he has now donned the form you see before you is to indicate that the time is not yet ripe to reveal the hiding-place of the vast treasure. But in the meantime thou must take these gold coins and put them to a good use. I will now despatch a message to the Genie, and ascertain further his wishes. Have no fear, my son, thou wilt inherit the treasure."

Mechanically, the Parsee took the proffered gold pieces, and the patriarch, producing a sheet of green scented paper and a gold pen, wrote something upon the paper. Having completed the message, he muttered a charm, and cast the sheet of paper from him. It hovered in the air a few moments, came in contact with the light, and disappeared in flame.

"The reply will be with us in a few minutes," murmured the Pir.

By this time the Parsee's knees were knocking together with nervous apprehension, and beads of perspiration stood upon his brow.

"O great saint," said he, "I am prepared and willing to do thy bidding, whatever it may be!"

"'Tis well," replied the Pir, in a compassionate voice. "O son of Noshirvan, the treasure is all for thee. I have no need of riches; I have done with all worldly affairs. Ah! here is the message!"

Seeming to thrust his hand into the light, he drew forth a green envelope, sealed with green wax. Tearing it open with eager fingers, he drew out a letter, which he read over in Arabic. Then, turning to the Parsee, he translated it to him.

"It is the command of the King of the Genii," he explained, "that the mortal to whom the treasure is to be given — who is unquestionably you, my son — must, ere he can become possessed of it, feed twenty-five thousand beggars of the land, in addition to furnishing new covers for the tombs of the saints. The cost of this would be twenty thousand rupees. So saith the message. My son, you must provide the money; it will be

the beginning of the good work thou must carry out when the gold is thine. In the meantime have no fears for the safety of the treasure, which is invisible to all eyes but thine and mine, for the snake will watch over it. Bethink thee, O son of Noshirvan——"

At this moment there was a loud noise without, the door was rudely thrust open, and in dashed Abdul Ali, with a following of police officers behind him. All the holy man's dignity vanished; his jaws dropped and his knees knocked together in abject fear. Gone was the gentle, winning grace of the devotee, gone was the masterful will of the wonder-worker, and Pandoo Soonderjee, arch-impostor and practised confidence-trickster, cringed and trembled before the majesty of the law! The Sardar drew a warrant from his pocket and arrested a much-wanted criminal. His assistants took care of the remaining conspirators, and all were promptly manacled and conveyed to prison.

It now becomes necessary to explain how the seeming miracles were performed by the Pir and self-styled "Saint Syed Magrabi." The praying on the beach was, of course, part of a clever plot, designed to attract a "pigeon" or dupe. That it deceived the Parsee in question

was well known to the chief actor; but before going further with the business he had satisfied himself, through the medium of one or two of his confederates, that the "bird was worth plucking," to employ their own phraseology. The stranger who gave him such an exalted character to the credulous Parsee on the seashore was also, of course, a confederate. Then came the *séance*. The elevation of the copper pot is thus explained:—In the hole made by Hassan there had been concealed in readiness a quantity of a preparation of lime known as *chunam*—which, when water is poured upon it, slowly swells. In the midst of this lime was placed a *chatti* of water. When Hassan thrust his spade into the hole he purposely upset the water, which, flowing over the *chunam*, caused it to rise, and so elevate the copper pot on the top of it. In the pot were found several pice—bronze coins about equal to a farthing in value—gilded over. These were the "gold mohurs" given to the deluded Parsee by the patriarch. The blood which flowed from Hassan's mouth was produced by chewing the root of a certain plant, and the letter-paper was a chemically-prepared substance that, upon being introduced to a flame, becomes consumed, leaving no ash. The receipt of the "reply message"

was simply sleight of hand, while the unearthly yellow light given off by the lamps was produced by introducing salt into methylated spirit.

Soonderjee and his confederates were badly "wanted" by the police, for they had shortly before swindled a prince of a native state by means of similar methods. The Sardar had, therefore, given instructions to his subordinates to keep a sharp look-out for the gang. It so happened that one of these same officers was a chance, although deeply interested spectator of the little comedy enacted on the seashore of Chowpati. Giving the "office" to his chief, the remainder of the entertainment was closely watched and followed. The Sardar purposely allowed the *séance* to proceed until the psychological moment arrived, so that he might catch the miscreants red-handed. All the gang were convicted and received long terms of imprisonment.

I shall next proceed to tell the story of a different class of confidence trick from the foregoing, and one far more elaborate.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE COVETOUS MULLAH—THE SNARE

In the year 1887 there dwelt at Khadak, Bombay, a certain mullah or Mohammedan priest and schoolmaster, known as Moolji Tyabjee. He was not a popular man, for he was mean and avaricious, and the people who came to him from the surrounding neighbourhood for his blessing invariably left money with him. Instead of using this for the relief of the poor, Tyabjee hoarded it up. Even his wife was in the habit of visiting ladies and receiving from them cast-off clothes, and thus a still further saving of expenditure was accomplished. By these means this penurious priest acquired a fortune of something like twenty thousand rupees, three houses of considerable value in Bombay, and a quantity of jewellery and other valuables. Yet he never gave a pice in charity. For the sake of economy, the miser partook of his meals, which were of a very frugal character, at a neighbouring coffee-

house. From constantly visiting this establishment he became a familiar figure to the other regular customers, and these chance acquaintances also profited the priest, for those of his own sect not infrequently invited him to partake of a meal, a courtesy that gladdened his heart not a little.

It so happened that one night Tyabjee was approached in the coffee-house by two munshi (teacher) brothers, who, having besought and received from him his blessing, invited him to sup with them, to which suggestion, as usual, he cordially agreed. The munshis proved to be excellent fellows, most entertaining, and of very generous disposition. Thereafter, night after night, the priest and the munshis met in the coffee-house, for they had become fast friends, and supped together—always at the munshis' expense. This was just what the priest of Khadak liked, and his miserly heart warmed to his newly-discovered acquaintances.

The jovial trio talked on various subjects, but the munshis were for the most part the narrators. They knew many things, strange and seemingly incredible. The priest was much interested thereat, and, talked they ever so much, he was anxious to hear more. Thus it happened that

they chanced to mention the Shrine of St Mama Hajain, situated on a hill at a place called Worli, expatiated on its beauty and wonderful reputation, and concluded by extending a cordial invitation to their companion to accompany them on a visit to the place, intimating that their visit should include a generous dinner. The priest, with sparkling eyes, accepted the invitation, and an appointment was arranged for the morrow. The Shrine was not far distant, and the next day the three met as described, and after prayers set forth on their journey.

When they arrived at the hill aforesaid it was late in the afternoon, and evening was drawing on apace. The lingering glow of the sinking sun illuminated the surrounding landscape with a rich golden light, shining upon the figures of the three pilgrims as, slowly and meditatively, they ascended the Holy Hill of Worli.

About half-way up the slope the trio came upon the Shrine of St Mama Hajain, before which, on a deer-skin mat, knelt an aged Mohammedan sage, engaged in earnest prayer. The three pilgrims drew back a few paces, and stood silently regarding the bent form of the holy man. Presently the silence was broken by the priest of Khadak, who ventured to whisper

to one of the munshis: "Who is the holy man? I have not seen him before."

The munshis expressed surprise at this, and one of them replied: "Oh, he is a well-known man, a great magician and wonder-worker, who possesses the power of producing precious metals from nothing. I do not know his name, but of his power I have heard much. If you are interested in him, why not speak with him? You are privileged; you are a priest."

The miser was greatly interested.

"Is that so?" he returned. "I have heard of holy men who are possessed of powers more than those of ordinary mortals; I have also heard of such men converting metals of a baser kind into gold and silver, but I never heard of one who could produce such precious metals from nothing! Yet it may be so; one can never tell. Know you where he comes from, or where he resides?"

"No," replied the munshi; "I know only that he comes periodically to the Shrine, but remains only a few days. Hush! he stirs."

Meanwhile the sage, having completed his devotions, raised his head, turned round, and caught sight of the three pilgrims. Thereupon

his venerable face expanded into a benevolent smile of welcome, and he said kindly: "Be seated, my children."

All seated themselves near the sage, who addressed himself almost exclusively to the mullah, whom he questioned concerning himself and his affairs, and with whom he seemed greatly pleased. Finally the sage spoke as follows: "Know, holy man, that recently there came to me in a dream-vision, the blessed form of Mohammed the Prophet, who warned me that the sands of my life were nearly spent. Ere it was too late he bade me journey to this Shrine, here to meet a holy man of my creed, to whom I was directed to impart a vital secret. A voice whispers within me that you are that man, and I will at once put it to the test."

Here he picked up a queer-shaped hookah which lay near, and also produced from the folds of his robe a curious-looking substance which presented the appearance of a mixture of charred root and tobacco leaf.

"This," he continued, "is the root of the wondrous plant aksir, which possesses the power of converting copper into gold. Brother, have you a copper coin?"

The mullah, much impressed, fumbled in his

pockets, and at length produced a quarter-anna piece, which he handed to the sage. Placing it in the pipe the latter laid some of the aksir over the coin, and smoked placidly for a few moments. Then he suddenly knocked the ash from the pipe, and lo! in the place of the copper piece there fell out a golden coin!

"'Tis even so, brother!" exclaimed the sage, with beaming countenance. "You are the priest selected by the Great Prophet to succeed me in the good work of relieving the sufferings of mankind. The secret shall be yours, I will impart it to you, but not to-day. The time is short, and the hour of prayer approaches. In the meantime, however, take this gold coin and come again to this Shrine, when the secret shall be revealed. Now leave me, my children; I would be alone with my thoughts."

With that he waved to them to depart, and sank into a profound reverie, while the three pilgrims wended their way down the hill again, the mullah, with a joyful heart, fondly clutching the gold coin. Having dined generously the men parted, with a mutual promise to meet on the morrow. The mullah returned home with a light step and spent a sleepless night in rosy conjectures on the subject of the wealth that

lay in the lap of the near future. He would be a rich man, doubly and trebly rich; for had he not seen the miracle performed before his eyes, and would not the secret soon be his? Moreover, he held in his possession, in the shape of the mysterious gold coin, undeniable and tangible evidence of the secret that the Prophet had ordained should be his. But he was a careful man and decided to seek still further proof, so on the morrow he hied him to a goldsmith's, and, placing the coin before him, requested him to test it. This the goldsmith did, and declared it to be "one hundred touch" —that is to say, the purest metal. Thereupon the mullah's delight knew no bounds, and with a heart bursting with gladness he hurried to keep his appointment with the munshis at the coffee-house. They were there already and welcomed him effusively; but to the mullah's eager request that they should depart at once for the Holy Hill at Worli, they demurred.

"No," said one; "this is a day of worship, and if we go the sage will not see us; I know that. We will go to-morrow."

The mullah was compelled, therefore, much against his will, to possess his avaricious soul in patience. On the morrow, as arranged,

the trio again journeyed to the Hill at Worli, the munshis bearing flowers and sweetmeats as offerings to the sage. The latter they found in his accustomed attitude before the Shrine, and when he saw them he welcomed them with a smile of ineffable sweetness. Turning to the mullah, he said: "It affords me great pleasure to greet you once more, for you must know that the blessed Prophet has again appeared to me in a vision, and intimated his pleasure at what has passed between us. Thursday next is our most sacred day, and that shall be the time for imparting the secret. It is so decreed."

Then the sage made a request, as before, that the mullah should give him a copper coin, in order that he might transform it into purest gold. The mullah accordingly produced a pice, which was promptly converted by the sage, in the mysterious manner already described, into a gold coin. He then directed his visitors to depart, and return on the following Thursday.

Making deep obeisances, the three returned down the hill. Arrived at the mullah's house, one of the munshis intimated that he expected to be allowed to participate in the priest's good fortune. To this proposal the penurious priest demurred, protesting that he had not yet been

the recipient of anything; but the munshi insisted that Tyabjee had consented to learn the secret that would put him in possession of riches, and it was of these that he expected a share. Still, however, the priest continued obdurate; he would not consent, he said, to any division of the inheritance.

At this the munshi grew angry, and threatened that unless he received an adequate share of the money he would expose the priest as a miserly skinflint, upon learning which the sage would leave Bombay in disgust with the precious secret still locked in his bosom. Alarmed at the prospect, the mullah accorded a reluctant assent to his companion's demands.

On the Thursday following all three paid yet another visit to the Holy Hill at Worli, where once more they found the sage at his devotions before the Shrine. He greeted them cordially, but soon intimated that the time was not yet ripe for the secret to be revealed.

"My children," said he, "I regret that the precious aksir is all but spent. You must know that it is obtained from a plant, and is to be found only at the beginning of the monsoon. That time, fortunately, is very near, and we shall not have long to wait. It is impossible

to work without this plant, so we must have patience. In the meantime it is necessary that I should have a suitable dwelling wherein to tarry, and"—he turned to the mullah patronisingly—"I will seek shelter in your home, where we may discuss at length much that will interest and concern you."

Although the mullah was delighted to welcome so precious a friend as the sage to his hospitable board, he also swiftly took into account the cost of such a proceeding, for he could not offer the holy man the frugal food he was himself in the habit of living upon, but would have to furnish first-class meals. But then the advantage of having the holder of the invaluable secret so near him—all to himself, so to speak—far outweighed any other consideration; in fact, it influenced the avaricious man so much on the side of generosity that he also extended an invitation to the munshis to stay with him at his house, which they were not slow to accept. So it fell out that the friendly quartette took up their residence at the abode of the mullah, living in amity and good-fellowship.

One day, while the sage was seated at the door of the mullah's house, reflectively smoking his hookah, it chanced that two wayfarers came

by—an aged man leaning heavily on the shoulder of a youth. Both looked weary and footsore, and when the young man caught sight of the sage he called his companion's attention to him, exclaiming: "Oh, look, father! There is the holy fakir of whom we are in quest!"

The old man glanced towards the sage, and immediately his lack-lustre eyes were lit up with a radiant look of gratitude and joy, and he salaamed deeply.

"O great, and good, and holy man," he exclaimed, in a quivering voice, "I have travelled many weary miles to seek you, and I bless the Prophet for thus directing my steps. Your servant is again in sore need of your benevolent assistance. I require two thousand rupees for the blessed nuptials of a son and daughter. Will the holy father again extend to me a helping hand, and receive the blessing of one already deeply grateful for generous aid administered? At one time it seemed that my wanderings in search of you would see no ending, for they have extended over three weary months. I am an old man, my days are numbered, and if the holy father will not assist me, I know not where to go."

As he concluded the old man's voice trembled

with emotion, and he shook his bowed head despairingly. All this time the mullah had stood at the side of the sage, and the latter now turned to him and said: "This is indeed a deserving case, but, alas! I have not sufficient aksir with which to work. Brother, you must give this money. It is but a trifle to you, and the poor must not be disappointed. To relieve suffering humanity is a noble thing, and this poor old man must not be sent away empty."

The mullah, in great distress at the idea of parting with money, hastily declared that he had not sufficient cash at hand, and that he would have to dispose of some of his jewellery. This the sage imperatively directed him to do. The mullah, having reasoned with himself that it would make no difference in the end, when he became master of the secret, proceeded to convert some of his jewellery into currency notes, which were handed over to the old man, who thereupon departed with many blessings for the sage and the mullah upon his lips.

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CHAPTER XV

THE COVETOUS MULLAH—TRAPPED!

A few days later all the four friends paid another visit to the Holy Hill at Worli. While they were standing before the Shrine of St Mama Hajain, a poorly-clad woman appeared and prostrated herself at the feet of the sage.

"O holy father," she exclaimed, in a voice of distraction, "I am weighed down with grief and want. I have lost husband and son, and left helpless with many little children, for whom I have no food. I have heard of your name, and came to beseech your help, holy father, in my sore distress!"

Thereupon the poor woman shed copious tears. The sage took her on one side and invited her to state her wants definitely. This she did, and then the sage turned to Tyabjee and requested that he should give the poor creature the sum of fifteen hundred rupees, together with two hundred for road expenses,

He intimated at the same time that he dared not leave the Shrine until this had been done. He would wait there, he added, while the mullah procured the money and returned with it. Tyabjee consented, albeit somewhat reluctantly, and set out for his house. On the way he reasoned out the situation. It was clear, he told himself, that he must not risk the money that he had already expended by refusing this further sum, and so offending the holy man once for all. If he angered the sage, and the latter departed before revealing the secret, he would lose all he had already laid out. It would not, on the other hand, matter in the end, because he would get it all back and much more besides. Comforted by this reflection, he procured the necessary amount, returned with it to the Holy Hill, and handed it to the sage, who passed it on to the woman. She took her departure with many expressions of gratitude towards the holy man.

The mullah having later complied with a still further request for two thousand rupees—like the rest, to be spent in charity—the bursting of the monsoon arrived, and with it came the time for starting out upon the journey in search of the coveted plant aksir. Never was rain so

joyfully welcomed as was this by the mullah, who, depressed at parting with so much of his jealously-hoarded wealth, had been as gloomy as the clouds which now relieved his depression, and put him into the best of spirits.

At last the morning arranged for the expedition arrived, and the four men—the munshis, the holy man, and Tyabjee — took train to a place called Kalyan, the fares being paid by the eager mullah. From the station they proceeded on foot to a hill called Haji Malang's Mountain, up which the sage led the way. Having travelled about half the distance to the summit, the holy man paused, and said impressively: "We approach the spot where the sacred plant is to be found."

Scarcely had the words left his lips when there smote upon the ears of the men a monotonous murmur, as of some one praying. The sage at once started forward with a look of alarm on his face. Before them was a ledge of rock, and round this the holy man hastened, followed by the anxious mullah and the munshis.

Turning the corner they beheld an aged, silvery-haired man upon his knees, praying fervently. Upon beholding the newcomers a

look of fierce indignation flashed from his eyes, and he rose tottering to his feet.

"Dog!" he exclaimed, addressing himself to the sage. "How dare you bring such creatures as these to break in upon my devotions? Would you reveal the precious secret?"

The sage, who seemed awestruck at sight of the stranger, answered deferentially: "Know, holy father, that in a vision recently it has been revealed to me that, my days on earth being numbered, the secret must be confided to this holy man here, and——"

"You lie, you dog!" interrupted the old man passionately, his snowy locks quivering with the unseemly rage that possessed him. "I tell you to your face that you lie! Your abject manner and stammering words betray you. The precious herb shall never be yours. The secret was conveyed to me through the Prophet, and I will protect it with my life. I will curse the aksir and render it useless as clay in your hands!"

"The curse will avail you nothing," exclaimed the sage, suddenly assuming a defiant attitude. "No power shall prevent me carrying out the mandate of my vision. I will have the herb!"

"With my life will I protect the sacred plant

against your foul fingers!" exclaimed the old man angrily. "If you lay hands upon it I will blast you with lightnings and wither you with fires!"

At that moment, as though in response to the threat, a peal of thunder rolled overhead and muttered away in the distance. But the sage continued defiant. "I warn you," said he, "that I will gather the herb, and you will attempt to stay me at your peril!"

"And at your peril be it also!" replied the other old man, equally determined.

Without more ado the sage made straight for a clump of peculiar plants which grew near, and proceeded to drag them up by the roots.

"May the Prophet give me strength to deal with this sacrilegious monster!" exclaimed the old man, and he threw off his outer cloak and prepared to deal with the sage. As he did so the mullah, standing in perplexity close by, noticed that his activity and brawny arms were scarcely in keeping with his generally senile appearance. Promptly he flung his arms round the waist of the sage, and, in spite of his struggles, lifted him high in the air and dropped him unceremoniously down the side of the hill, whence

he rolled over and over down the steep slope to the bottom.

Thereupon the victorious old man turned upon the others, but they fled hastily after their companion, while the patriarch stood on a pinnacle of rock with folded arms, and hurled after them many full-bodied curses.

The mullah, much perturbed by the turn of events, arrived at the base of the hill just as the sage was ruefully rubbing his bruises, and promptly assailed him with angry words.

"Are we not to gather the aksir," he demanded, "after all the money I have spent?"

"This anger ill becomes one of your holy calling," said the sage, in chastened tones. "Have no fear; all will come right in the end. Help me up, brother; I am sore."

The mullah assisted the sage to his feet, but he was not by any means reassured, and expressed his dissatisfaction in unmistakable terms. The sage endeavoured to appease him and explain matters satisfactorily.

"It is unfortunate," said he, "that this saint should have come before me, inasmuch as he is a good deal more powerful than I. But have no fear, brother: the aksir shall be ours yet. Let us return home."

This did not altogether please the mullah, nor, indeed, did it apparently satisfy the munshis, for one of them suggested that they should go back and deal summarily with the ancient saint, interlarding his discourse with formidable threats towards their common enemy. But the mullah was not eager to try conclusions with the saint, for whose strength and determination he had conceived a wholesome respect. It was, therefore, a somewhat crestfallen party that returned to the mullah's house at Bombay, leaving the stalwart patriarch in undisputed possession of the precious plant that was to produce gold for the miserly Tyabjee.

The mullah did not recover his spirits as readily as the others seemed to do, and he almost began to begrudge the ample meals they daily consumed at his expense. He still, however, had faith in the holy man, who informed him that it would be necessary for him (the sage) to take a journey to a certain shrine at Dhatar, in Kathiawar, where there grew a plant of even more sovereign virtues than aksir. The following year, he added, they would go to another mountain for aksir. In the meantime they need not be idle, for he would

instruct Tyabjee in the method of making maunds of gold from baser metals.

"Go you," said the sage, "to the bazaar, and there search for the copper of Damascus, and, having procured it, bring it hither, and I will show you wonders with it."

The mullah, who had already disposed of one of his houses in order to raise funds to meet the sage's demands, did as he was told, and with the surplus of the money obtained by the sale set out to purchase copper of Damascus, hopeful that at last he was about to recoup himself for the heavy expenses he had been put to. The munshis accompanied him, and they wandered about all day in the streets of Bombay, enquiring for Damascus copper, but were unable to obtain it. At last, however, they came to the shop of a smith, which they entered, and repeated their request. The shopkeeper seemed startled and alarmed, expressing his surprise that such material should be asked for, and asking if they had any idea of its value. One of the munshis apologetically explained that it was for a friend, whereupon the smith said that the copper had been in his family for more than fifty years, and was more precious than gold. The mullah expressed him-

self anxious to purchase, but the smith refused to sell until he had been informed for what the copper was required. At this, one of the munshis made a peculiar sign, and the smith requested to be shown the man who knew how to use the copper; but this, of course, could not be done.

"Then," said he, "I must charge you the same price per tola as gold, for gold can be made from it."

Tyabjee naturally objected to this, and so no business was then done. Returning home, the mullah explained matters to the sage, who, on mention of the smith, became very excited.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "do not bring him here, or he may recognise me. Pay his price at once, and do not argue. The metal is far more precious than gold!"

This satisfied the mullah, who promptly returned to the smith and purchased the copper, giving the price of gold for it. This difficulty overcome, the sage intimated that a certain plant only was now needed—not the aksir which they had failed to obtain, but another and more wonderful plant, with which to make a lotion. This plant was to be found at a place called

Dhalai, whither they would journey, and where there would be no stalwart saint to interfere.

The mullah had now spent so much money that he dared not lose sight of the sage at this stage of the proceedings, and therefore readily consented to accompany his mentor even before he had been invited. The night before they were to embark upon this journey to Dhalai, the sage produced a small piece of aksir and informed the mullah that it was the last he had, but that the plant they would find on the morrow possessed far more wonderful properties. Although the piece of aksir he had was too small with which to reveal the secret, he said he would utilise it to convert a copper coin into a gold one, as he had done before. This he did, using a quarter-anna piece given him by Tyabjee, and he gave him the gold piece which he apparently manufactured before his eyes.

This curious performance pleased the mullah immensely, and when they all set out for Dhalai next day he took with him a sum of five thousand rupees, at the invitation of the sage. By this time the miser had disposed of another of his houses, all his ready cash having been exhausted.

"HE SAID HE WOULD UTILIZE IT TO CONVERT A COPPER COIN INTO A GOLD ONE."

Arrived at Dhalai, the mullah noticed with secret consternation that there were many poor people about, and one of them, an old man, addressed himself to the sage, begging for assistance. This application was followed by several others, and eventually — the wretched Tyabjee not daring to protest — the whole of the five thousand rupees was distributed in charity. Then the sage gathered a quantity of a plant growing near, and, after delivering himself of sundry prayers and incantations, led the return to the mullah's house. Here his manner became very mysterious. He had the windows of the room he had been occupying darkened, and remained secluded for a day and a night. Next morning he emerged, and informed Tyabjee that the plant was successfully distilled, but that before going further it would be necessary to procure a hundred tolas of pure gold, to work in conjunction with the copper. This, however, would be positively the last outlay.

At this the mullah was aghast. He protested, almost with tears in his eyes, that he had already parted with two of his three houses and all his available cash, and had received no return save two or three gold coins. The sage became highly indignant at the mullah's out-

burst, which he evidently regarded as mercenary in the extreme.

"Then sell your other house, or the secret can never be yours!" he cried angrily. "Sell at once, sir, and bring the gold to me!"

The mullah, much distressed, went forth in haste, sold his remaining house so summarily that he was compelled to accept much less than its value, and returned with the money to the sage. The latter he found in his darkened room, which was lighted only by a cocoa-nut-oil lamp. Soon after the holy man showed him the gold ground to dust at the bottom of a basin-like receptacle. Upon this he poured a yellow liquid, which he declared had been distilled from the plant gathered at Dhalai.

"It now only remains," said he impressively, "to keep stirring the liquid with this steel rod for the space of seven days. This must be done between us four, each taking turns, one relieving the other. We must work in spells of four hours each. Should the stirring, once it is started, be interrupted, then the spell will be destroyed, and all our labour be in vain. Mark that well, brother; it is of vital consequence. Once the stirring ceases, the secret will be in jeopardy, and may never be known

to you. I will begin at once, and I pray you leave me to my task and let me not be interrupted ere it is completed."

The sage was accordingly left to himself in the darkened room, and the excited mullah joined the munshis below. It was agreed that one of the latter should relieve the sage, and that the mullah should follow the munshi. The time slipped slowly by, and at length one of the munshis took the sage's place. The holy man reappeared, looking somewhat tired.

"Yet it is for a good cause, so I grudge not the labour," he said graciously.

At last Tyabjee's turn arrived, and, arming himself with a clock, and having received the good wishes of the others, he made his way to the darkened room and relieved the munshi, who was stirring slowly and dreamily. Placing the clock on the floor in front of him, the agitated priest took the steel rod from the munshi and began his monotonous task. The munshi gave him good wishes, bidding him be of good cheer, and quitted the room. The hour was now eight in the evening, and the mullah would be relieved at midnight.

At first he stirred briskly, but at the end of the first half-hour found it necessary to go

slower, and also to change hands. At the conclusion of the first hour both arms ached sadly, but he had no intention of abandoning his task, for did not fortune depend upon it? When the clocks chimed ten he began to feel giddy and sick, but still he toiled on manfully, with the words of the sage ringing in his ears: "Should the stirring be interrupted, the spell will be destroyed."

When eleven o'clock struck he was feeling very feeble, but dared not stop. It cheered him to feel that the hour of his deliverance was now fast approaching. In future, he decided, he would propose a shorter spell; four hours was much too long.

Would the hour of midnight *never* chime? His whole body was aching and throbbing, his head spinning round like a top, and he felt as though stretched upon a rack.

At last the chimes of midnight fell upon his throbbing ears and he heaved a mighty sigh of relief as he felt that the moment of delivery was at hand. But he would not, must not, pause in his task until relief came, as come it surely would. But the chimes died away, silence ensued, and there came no sound of approaching footsteps. Tyabjee's heart sank

within him. What could it mean? he asked himself; had they forgotten him? Surely not! They would be here directly, no doubt, so he would keep on stirring, He *must*, he told himself grimly, or all would be ruined. They must be sleeping, he thought, so he called out, but there was no response. Still he stirred on, his mind a chaos, his body numbed from head to foot. At last came collapse; he rolled over and fell into a deep sleep.

He was aroused by being roughly shaken by one of the munshis. When he realised what had happened he was much distressed.

"The spell is broken!" he exclaimed in agonised accents.

"Yes," replied the munshi wrathfully, "and the sage is very angry, and has left!"

"He saw me?" asked Tyabjee miserably.

"He did, and now we shall never see him again. What are we to do?"

The munshi spoke the truth: the sage was gone. The disconsolate trio then examined the contents of the vessel and discovered, to their intense astonishment and dismay, that the supposed gold dust was in reality brass — the genuine gold had disappeared with the sage! The munshis were very angry and vowed that

they would yet find the impostor, as the alleged "holy man" must have been, and make him suffer for his cruel deception.

When the wretched Tyabjee at length emerged from the state of hallucination in which he had so long been groping, he found himself a completely ruined man, minus the wherewithal to purchase even a meal. Bitterly he bemoaned his misfortune, and the munshis sympathised deeply with him, although, as they stated, they were victims themselves. At all events, they could not starve, so one of them handed Tyabjee a few copper coins and asked him to go and buy sufficient provisions to make a meal for them all. The mullah, dejected beyond measure, sallied forth, but had not gone many yards when one of the munshis followed in his tracks and walked up to a police-officer, to whom he whispered something, at the same time indicating the retreating form of the priest. The latter, all unsuspecting, presented the copper coins to a shopman, whereupon the policeman entered the shop and promptly arrested him on a charge of attempting to pass bad money. Loudly the astonished man protested his innocence, but the coins, on examination, proved to be undoubtedly base, and he was removed in custody. Upon his

house being searched, coining implements were found secreted there, and he was committed for trial on the grave charges of not only being a coiner, but of also attempting to pass the spurious money. The case was tried at the Sessions House, and, although the prisoner stoutly maintained his innocence, he was convicted and sent to rigorous imprisonment.

It was when this luckless man came out of prison that he confided the whole amazing story of his credulity and its results to the Sardar, to whom the information proved useful in the task of tracking down the heartless miscreants responsible for the priest's undoing. That, however, forms another story.

This case is probably unique in the completeness of the ruin which overtook the dupe. Admitting that his credulity was colossal, the means by which he was victimised were remarkably skilful and elaborate. All the parties who had taken part in it were consummate actors, and played their parts with faultless judgment. The supposed "poor people" who were relieved at the mullah's expense; the two munshis (who also disappeared after the priest was safely in the hands of the police); the smith in the bazaar; and the old man who fought the sage

on the hill, and who was not so old as he looked, were one and all confederates. The sage was, of course, the head of the gang, and planned everything, commencing his plot with the munshis as decoys. In all that happened subsequently there was not a single flaw. The trick of changing a copper coin into a gold piece was performed by sleight of hand, in which these rascals were expert. The gold coins were genuine, and were used as bait. It is probable that at one stage of the proceedings the mullah may have had some lurking suspicions concerning the proceedings, but he was then so pledged to the business that he dared not draw back. Moreover, the rogues thoroughly knew their victim and how to play upon his cupidity. They, of course, did no stirring in the darkened room, this being a ruse under cover of which the "sage" got away. As a final malicious stroke, after having bled their victim, the bad coins were purposely given to Tyabjee by the munshis and the coining implements "planted" in his house to complete his ruin and prevent him from giving information about his persecutors.

CHAPTER XVI

DACOITY

ONE of the most serious forms of crime in India is the organised robbery known as "dacoity." The thieves go in gangs, are armed, and suddenly descend upon a dwelling, which they proceed to strip of all its valuables, at the same time treating the inmates to great violence, even taking life upon occasions. They are somewhat similar to our burglars, only much worse. They generally select a cottage or bungalow situated near a jungle, in which they conceal themselves, swooping down upon the house when the inmates have retired for the night. These dacoits are frequently recruited from the ranks of the poor, when the paddy harvest is poor or scarce, and the prices correspondingly high. They are much dreaded by people with any valuables about their premises.

Let me describe a case of dacoity which occurred a few years ago in a village in Burma,

which will give the reader a very good idea of what happens upon such occasions, and the trouble the European police have in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

The village in question consisted of about seventy houses, and the one chosen by the dacoits to be "burgled" was situated on the outskirts, close to a jungle. The gang consisted of close on a score of robbers. The Indian dacoit does not, like the burglar of the West, proceed as quietly as possible, with a view to avoiding contact with anybody, but makes a determined and violent raid upon the residence, and by virtue of superiority of numbers and the possession of weapons, sweeps the inmates from his path. Upon the occasion in question, at two in the morning, the robbers emerged from their hiding-place in the jungle, carrying lighted torches, and smashed the door of the house. That was the first intimation that the inmates—a man, his wife, and a daughter of sixteen — had of the presence of the robbers. It was, however, sufficient to acquaint them with the nature of the nocturnal visit, and the man and woman promptly made good their escape at the back for the purpose of summoning aid. It was unfortunate, how-

ever, for the poor girl that she was left behind, for the dastardly thieves proceeded to *tear* her earrings from her ears, and the baubles from her wrists. Then, producing a formidable *dah*, or sword, intimated to her that if she raised any alarm, or attempted to escape, she would have her head cut off. In order, also, to further impress this upon her, they laid the weapon down handy for that purpose. Held in the grip of this murderous threat, the luckless girl could only remain quiescent and trembling, already mutilated in the ears.

The dacoits then proceeded to sack the place. They broke open every box they could find, and with the pieces kindled a fire outside, in order to afford them a better light to work by. They next turned their attention to a large iron box, and there found jewellery and money to the value of thirty thousand rupees (two thousand pounds). The money, which was in bags, they cast through the window to the ground below, where some of the bags broke, the money being scattered over the ground. Having secured all the valuables they could find they prepared to depart. At this moment, the owner, having procured the assistance of half a dozen villagers, including the headman—all the other villagers had

taken fright, and had hidden themselves either under their houses or up trees—arrived upon the scene, and a fight ensued. The dacoits tried to make off, but the villagers, some of whom were armed with *dahs*, followed them up, striking at them with their weapons. Thus one of the robbers was mortally wounded, and another disabled. The latter and his assailant came to grips, and rolled over into a pond, but the robber was subsequently secured and made prisoner. The other wounded man soon after expired, and the remainder of the dacoits made good their escape into the jungle, from which they had emerged, taking a large quantity of their booty with them.

These were the facts imparted, by "express messenger" bearing the familiar red envelope, to the European officer at the nearest district headquarters. The officer in question at once proceeded to the scene of the robbery, examined the house, then interviewed the solitary prisoner, who was only slightly wounded in the arm. His name, he said, was Kya Gyi, and he treated the matter very unconcernedly. The officer was in hopes of inducing him to make a clean breast of it, and "give away" his confederates, with a view to being leniently dealt with him-

self; but in this he was mistaken, for, beyond giving his name, he would not utter a syllable. So there was nothing for it but to follow in the tracks through the jungle of those who had got away, which the officer, accompanied by a number of his subordinates, proceeded at once to do. Their path, as may be supposed, was a very difficult one, and lay through compact jungle, over bamboo bridges which spanned creeks, across clearings, and so forth. They, of course, had their kit with them. It was a long journey, a man-hunt. The dacoits were supposed to have come from a village about 30 miles away, and it would be a several days' job.

At one village which they passed through they learned that they were too late for the dacoits, who, in a gang of about sixteen, had left ahead of them two days before, and going north. Thence the officer, with six military police and some guides, followed. Several days had elapsed since the robbery, and the officer, well acquainted with the native mind, calculated that the robbers, feeling safe after this lapse of time, and in possession of their ill-gotten gains, would not hesitate to pause protractedly during the heat of day. In this we shall find he was

not mistaken. He himself, and his companions, however, should push on, halting only for the purpose of taking meals. By this means it was hoped to come up with them. The first day they got some news from a boy they saw tending some cows and goats. He said he had seen a lot of men approaching, and, not liking the look of them, had hidden himself till they had passed. The boy pointed out the direction they had taken, and the police made off after them. Night descended, and the robbers had not been seen. It was deemed advisable not to light fires lest they gave the alarm to the quarry, who might be near, and and so they lay down in the dark, the officer munching a biscuit or two, and taking a pull at his whisky flask.

Ere daybreak the party resumed their journey, sending ahead a couple of scouts to report directly they caught a glimpse of the retreating dacoits. Very soon the police came upon unmistakable traces of the robbers in the shape of a half-smoked cheroot, and some footmarks in a patch of soft soil. Shortly after they came upon a clearing which clearly had been the scene of a halt, where breakfast had been partaken of. There were the remains of a fire. The officer felt the ashes,

and, finding them still warm, knew that the dacoits were not far off. On they pushed again, having paused only a few minutes, and crossed 2 miles of paddy-fields, when suddenly a man rose up from the long grass just in front of them. Instantly fingers were on triggers; but there was no cause for alarm, for it was merely one of their own guides. Just ahead of the paddy-fields there was a patch of swampy jungle, and in here, said the guide, or scout, the robbers were concealed. They had caught sight of him, and had retreated into the jungle.

This was good news. Immediately the officer and his subordinates charged up to the jungle, when a couple of shots rang out, and a couple of bullets sang an unpleasant melody as they sped over the heads of the police. Evidently they meant to fight for it. The officer thereupon gave orders to his men to at once load with buckshot, and himself called upon the robbers to surrender or be shot down. The reply was a similar dual salutation as before, which happily also did skylark overhead. Then the officer gave orders to his men to fire, and a volley of buckshot went tearing through the jungle. This was answered by yells of pain, and three men rushed out shouting they would

surrender. But they were covered by rifles and told to call out the others. This they did, and others came out, more or less wounded, until twelve were accounted for. Then the officers asked where the others were, and in reply was told they were "in there." That was true, and they would never of their own accord come out again. They were all dead, shot through the head. The bodies were buried, and the prisoners conveyed to headquarters to be sent up for trial. One of the prisoners revealed the hiding-place of some of the stolen property, which was accordingly found buried at the foot of a mango tree. They would probably receive about ten years' transportation each.

Such is dacoity, and not infrequently the fate of dacoits, in the East.

CHAPTER XVII

RIOTS AND OPIUM DENS

On account of the rivalry existing between the different sects in India serious riots occasionally occur, attended with much bloodshed, and sometimes with loss of life. Now and again these occur on festival days, when the rival ceremonies come into insurrectionary collision. One such disturbance happened a few years ago at a place called Baragaon. Upon a particular day it so fell out that the Mahomedan mourning of the Mohurrum was celebrated at the same time as the Hindu rejoicings of the Ramlila festival—a coincidence, curiously enough, which transpires once only in fifty years. Upon the occasion in question there had been a kind of mutual understanding or agreement of goodwill, drawn up with due ceremony on a mud dais situated under a pipul tree; but in spite of this a "difference" developed which assumed such serious proportions that the Commissioner of Police of the

district, Major-General Fendall Currie, on the eve of a "day off," was summarily called upon to hurry to the scene of the disturbance.

Upon his arrival he found the police depôt in a state of siege, and learned that two men had been killed, and several injured. All the police were shut up in their quarters, and the rioters had been having a high old time of it. The siege being raised and peace restored, an investigation was set on foot to discover the true cause of the outbreak. From this it would appear that the Hindus were the aggressors, and that they had goaded the Mahomedans into committing deeds of violence. The Hindus had got the worst of it, and they were, therefore, not slow to exaggerate the guilt of their foes. Both sides lied lustily, and it was not easy to get at the truth. About forty arrests were made, the prisoners being charged with various offences to be found in the accommodating sections of the Indian Penal Code.

The judge who tried the case had a most unenviable task to perform. He had to hold the scales of justice, one side of which was heavily weighted with official corruption and testamentary mendacity. Shoals of witnesses were called, all of whom told about a tenth of

the truth, and nine-tenths of that which was not true. It is not so much a question whether a native of India can tell a lie as whether he can tell the truth. Mendacity is an old-established institution in India. Just think of the task that lay before that youthful Christian judge, who had to weigh the evidence of witnesses who had become hardy liars ere he was born! Justice was also impeded by an organised system of official corruption, native clerks purposely mislaying important papers, and doctoring police diaries. In the end some were convicted and others acquitted.

In Burma the authorities have a good deal of trouble with the smuggling and use of opium, and in this connection the European officers occasionally perform prodigies of valour and enterprise in the carrying out of raids. Mr Arthur Gresham, a police official of Burma, relates an experience of his own of this kind which reads like melodrama, and affords an interesting side-light on the exciting and kaleidoscopic life led by European officers in the land of rubies.

One morning Mr Gresham, while at tiffin, received the visit of a native named Tha Len, who reported that a certain Chinese joss-house

was being used for illegal purposes. The story sounded doubtful to the officer, inasmuch as he had always regarded the temple in question as beyond reproach. There was also the native character to be taken into consideration, which, as I have already explained, is not remarkable for veracity. Mr Gresham, however, determined to test it, and in order to do so had himself disguised as a Burmese trader, one of his servants being very clever at disguises. His object was to gain admission to the joss-house to make observation, at the same time preserving his *incognito*. Before venturing on his expedition, however, he tested the disguise by walking up to one of his own policemen in the street, and entering into conversation with him. The result was highly satisfactory, for the constable became so suspicious of him that he was on the point of taking him to the station when, by means of certain words and gestures, the officer made himself known.

Accompanied by his servant, also disguised, therefore, the officer set out for the joss-house, as evening was drawing down, and strolled unconcernedly past it. One of the first things the officer saw much surprised and gratified him, for, behind the house several balls of smuggled

opium were being conveyed into the house in innocent-looking clothes baskets by the Chinese doorkeeper! The officer decided to arrest the smuggler, so sent his servant for two constables for that purpose, at the same time giving instructions that the arrest must be made well away from the joss-house, so that the inmates of the latter might not be alarmed. This was done, and, waiting until such time as it would appear pretty certain that the smuggler was safely under lock and key, the officer and his servant returned to the joss-house.

When the officer arrived at the entrance to the joss-house, to his surprise, he was refused admittance, the bland and childlike doorkeeper stating that he must get somebody else to answer for him. No persuasion or blandishments served to remove the doorkeeper's scruples, not even three rupees which he was given, although he pocketed these. This was rather an unexpected set-back. Who could he get? Suddenly he bethought him of the man who had lodged the information, Tha Len, and very soon after he was talking with him in a neighbouring thoroughfare. The man volunteered to find a guarantee, and was not long in doing so, and in ten minutes the officer and his servant found themselves within the joss-

house. The scene that presented itself was one of wholesale and unbridled debauchery, that in no way discounted the evidence of the informer. Drunkenness, gambling, opium-smoking, and immorality were in free progress. The opium "den" was apart, but the other evils were proceeding quite openly. Three Burmese girls were acting as waiters—and in other capacities. These girls were evidently employed by the rascally proprietor as "decoys."

It was not easy under the circumstances to decide what to do. If the officer went out to fetch a force of men, he might not get back again before the occupants had dispersed. It was essential to take them "red-handed." So he decided to make a bold move. He whispered his servant to go back and bring sufficient men to surround the place, giving as a signal that they were in position a long shrill whistle. Then he sat down and feigned drunkenness. He waited for the momentous signal, and while doing so a drunken Burman invited him to join in the gambling, but being refused shot a suspicious look at the officer that seemed to him for the moment to penetrate his disguise, and cause him some uneasiness. However, nothing practical came of it, and ere he had

time to dismiss it from his mind, a shrill whistle sounded without, and he knew the time was come.

He decided that the back door offered him the post of greatest vantage for his purpose, so thither he insinuated his way, placing his back against the door. Then, drawing what our American friends would call his "shooter," he called loudly upon all present to "up hands," or be shot, as the place was surrounded. At the same time he blew a shrill blast on his whistle, which was the prearranged signal also for the raid to be made from without. But ere his men could gain admission he found himself in the middle of an ugly scrimmage, with his life in imminent peril. He was faced with a veritable small sea of yellow faces and black heads, but by dexterously using a loaded stick he had with him in the fashion of a rapier (he had no intention of using the revolver) he contrived to keep some leeway between himself and his assailants—at least from the bulk of them, for several contrived to fix themselves on to his limbs; and when some of his men, entering at the front, came to his rescue he was well-nigh as helpless as an infant in swaddling-clothes.

When the fight was over, and thirteen men taken prisoners, it was found that the "casualities" were not by any means numerous or serious. One eye would never see again, and two sets of teeth had munched their last crust. That was all, and not much of a price to pay for the breaking up of a most vicious and undesirable establishment.

The sequel of this raid is curious, and well worth relating, for it presents a very interesting phase of crime in the East.

The informer, Tha Len, turned out to have been a victim of the joss-house, he having been rooked there, hence his desire to give the place away. To the officer he appeared a country sort of chap, who would be likely to become an easy prey. As events turned out, however, he was not quite what he appeared to be. When, next morning, the keeper of the joss-house was being examined, he informed the officer that the informant was a far worse man than he was—that he was, in fact, a burglar, and that he intended, in company with another man — whose name he gave — to commit a burglary that very night at a silversmith's and metal-worker's at the end of the town. At first the officer regarded this as merely a bit

of spite, and hardly worthy of credence. For the time being he dismissed it from his mind.

Later on, while having supper, the affair recurred to his mind, and having turned it over he felt sorry that he had not, at least, made some enquiries about it. Was it too late to do so now? He consulted his watch. The burglary, the keeper of the joss-house had told him, was fixed for eleven o'clock. There was then still time to investigate the matter. He had some official letters to write, but he could do these and have plenty of time to spare. It was about half-past ten when, having completed his correspondence, he set out for the house of the silversmith. Purposely he chose a devious way, so that he might be as much as possible unobserved. When he arrived at the silversmith's the proprietor was abed, but he was soon induced to admit his nocturnal visitor. In a back room, in the presence of the silversmith and his stalwart son, he repeated the story told by the keeper of the joss-house, and they decided to profit by the warning, and hide in waiting upon the burglars. They posted themselves in convenient places, prepared to give the unwelcome visitors a cordial reception.

The hour of eleven arrived, but no burglars. The minutes passed, and the officer began to entertain again his original impression of the joss-house keeper's story. But, hark! what noise was that? The sound of careful and cautious sawing in the front of the shop. It came from the side of the front door, and upon that three pairs of eyes within were fixed in expectation, and the breath of three men was held in suspense. It continued for fully twenty minutes, when something gave way, and a hole appeared by the side of the door. Through this hole a hand was thrust, which was crooked towards the fastening, fumbled thereon some seconds, and then was withdrawn. As it did so the door swung open and two men insinuated themselves into the shop. The officer was concealed near the silversmith's son, and, as prearranged, a touch of the finger of the former upon the hand of the latter was the signal to emerge. Each made for the burglar nearest him, whom he instantly secured, and, for the intruders, the game was up upon the very threshold of success.

Both burglars were armed, but being securely pinned to the ground they were unable to use their weapons. But what interested the officer

most was the discovery that his prisoner was no other than the informer, Tha Len! He thereupon congratulated himself that he had not altogether dismissed from his mind the story of the incriminated keeper of the joss-house.

These incidents form but a page of the book that might be written about the strangely varied and exciting life led by the European police-officer in Burma.

CHAPTER XVIII

SEDITION

THERE exists, in the East as in the West, a noxious form of human growth, a kind of poisonous bindweed, whose serpentine twistings may be detected on various parts of the body politic; a restless, atrabilious, conscienceless distempered-minded creature, *sans* pride, *sans* dignity, *sans* shame, *sans* patriotism; no love for anything in life but self-aggrandisement, wholly unscrupulous by what means it is attained; envious of others' good qualities, superiority, and success, profiting only by disruption, disloyalty, and unblushing mendacity. This parasitic and gangrenous growth is called a *sedition-monger.*

His methods in the East are, naturally, somewhat different to those of his verminous kindred in the West, although his ultimate aim is equally as infamous. He does not care anything for truth, and is a relentless enemy to everybody,

himself included, inasmuch as every decent-minded individual detests him and contributes to his crushing whenever opportunity offers. Men may differ in politics, in *detail*, but all who are worth their salt are fundamentally united in wishing and working their country well. Not so, though, the fungus aforesaid, who, if he can in any way render a signal service to the enemies of his nation his unholy joy and self-gratulation know no bounds. The bloody periods of the world's history have no terrors or deterrents for them in the working out of their criminal machinations, always provided they are themselves tolerably safe. They are not, nor ever intend to be, constant or loyal to any particular body or set of opinions, for wherever dissension or destruction is that is their feeding-ground. In short, human carrion.

The only excuse, or palliating circumstance, which can possibly be advanced in extenuation of the behaviour of these undesirable individuals is that they may be wallowing in a slough of lamentable ignorance. Unfortunately their vicious vapourings are, particularly in India, rendered the more mischievous by being disseminated by either a complacent or venal press. The Fourth Estate of England, like many other

of its institutions, is a pattern for the whole world, but at times certain sections of it are liable to become forgetful, if not reprehensibly misguided. In India, particularly in the Deccan, a reptile press is quite an institution. It is even more corrupt and conscienceless than the press of the Continent. The native sedition-monger of India is a subtle-minded villain, and needs no aid from the West, which, however, he occasionally gets. The least venal of the native press of Poona and the Deccan have no thought nor care for truth, will print any wild and baseless rumour, in fact are glad to fill their columns with anything they can lay their hands on. To be sure, they have not many decent writers to rely upon to furnish them with conscientious "copy," and they must fill their columns with something. So serious had this kind of abuse become during the Administration of Lord Lytton—what was known as the Calcutta "baboo press" was particularly licentious—that a special "gagging Act" was passed to deal with it. But having smoked the rats out of one hole they were sure to turn up in another.

It is not difficult to start a native "sheet" in India—a thousand rupees will go a long way. A band of native youths who, having been

educated by Government, have, however, failed to qualify for employment, may start a native press, which will be supported mainly by blackmail. Native officials of various kinds will be called upon to subscribe liberally towards the scurrilous sheet, and, if they refuse, will be malignantly attacked, and their administration called into question. Rather than incur this onslaught many will consent to be plundered. In order to convey some idea how sedition is disseminated in India, let me briefly sketch an incident which occurred not long since in an editorial office in the Deccan.

The office in question is situated in *Shanwár Peith*, or Saturday Street, a kind of Fleet Street of the district. A "growler" of the East, called a "pony-shigram," in a very rickety condition, pulls up before a small whitewashed one-story house, with a projecting gallery above, painted bright green. The architecture is Bráhminical. From out the crazy vehicle steps a handsome young Bráhmin, with well-waxed moustache, clean-cut features, black eyebrows, and clean-shaven forehead. Decidedly of the highest caste, in fact his caste-mark is to be seen in the centre of his forehead, above his nose. He has small, green-grey eyes, full of craft. He is

handsomely dressed, having a large, grass-green turban on his head, a cashmere shawl of the same hue, worn carelessly over his left shoulder, a white calico jacket, his *dhoti* made of delicate salmon-pink muslin, with broad phylactery gracefully folded, forming richly broidered Zouâve-like knickerbockers, and patent leather shoes. In each ear is a valuable pearl. His full title is Rao Sahèb Vinkatèsh Mhâdeo Phoolmándikar, commonly known as "Bábá Sahèb," educated at Yerrowda College, and a B.A. of Bombay University. He is a seeker after "fat" jobs, and about him generally there is something which is usually designated as "slimy."

On the lower part of the building referred to is a large sign-board, bearing an inscription in Mahratti in white letters on a blue background. Beneath is an English translation, which runs, "The Office of *The Scourge of the Deccan.*" Bábá Sahèb, removing his turban, makes his way up a rickety staircase, and gives a peculiar knock upon a door bearing the inscription, "Editor's Room. Private." The door is unlocked, and a peculiar-looking figure admits the visitor. The peculiar-looking figure is the reverse of prepossessing. He is short, beetle-

browed, bandy-legged, evil-looking, with ferrety, beady, black eyes. He is naked to the waist, and his head is clean-shaven, with the exception of a whisp of hair on the crown of his head. By the marks on his forehead he is clearly a Deccan Bráhmin. He is also the editor of the *Scourge*. He is evil-smelling, and wears a generally dissipated look; he is hollow-chested, and is troubled with a hacking cough; beads of perspiration gather on his forehead, which he brushes away with the back of his hand. A half-empty bottle of spirits, labelled "Pure Bráhmin manufacture," is by his side, and several "dead 'uns" are on the floor. He has evidently had a "bad night."

Who and what is this curious individual, and how came he to be editor? He is the son of a low-born *koolkarni*, or village accountant, in an obscure village near Shôlapur; and his father, by means that can only be regarded as devious, contrived to have his son educated, first, at the free Government school in the city of Shôlapur, and, he having gained a scholarship, afterwards at Yerrowda College. It seemed at this stage of his career that he was in a fair way to attaining a University career, but, alas! he fell upon evil courses, and was soon rapidly on the downward

path. He came to writing letters for ignorant people, and also anonymous missives. Then he became associated with the native reptile press, and dealt in "exclusive" Government information. On one occasion an important despatch from the Bombay Government to the Viceroy got into the columns of the vernacular press, much to the consternation of the authorities. An enquiry was held, the result of which was a warrant was issued for the arrest of the dealer in exclusive Government information, known as Bhow Sahèb. But the latter got wind of it and disappeared. He "lay low" for some time surreptitiously contributing leading articles, and other inventions to the native press. Then a seditious body, known as the National Congress, sprang into existence, being anti-English in all its objects. They ran a paper, for the purpose of casting mud at all and sundry, and, wanting an editor for the precious medium, hit upon Bhow Sahèb as being the most fitted for the post. Hence *The Scourge of the Deccan.* The proprietor made a lot of money, and was able to invest in a "Lust-garten," or pleasure-garden. The paper at first dealt in unblushing sedition, and the Congress supported it in its evil work. It has since had to "tone down."

What does the resplendent Bábá Sahèb, who is a thing of beauty if he is not destined to be a joy for ever, want with the degenerate Bhow Sahèb? Well, it happens that the whisky-sodden editor is desirous of obtaining an increase of remuneration from the seditious Congress in return for his services, and it also happens that there is a very desirable post "to be let," which Bábá Sahèb would much like to obtain. But let us listen to the two for a few moments.

"I have not seen you so long I thought I had offended you," says the editor.

"Oh no," replies the resplendent, "you are ever in my heart. You know, the other day at a meeting of the Congress I spoke highly of the *Scourge* and its talented editor. Yes, and now let me confess it, I have come to ask of you a little favour in return. There is a tutorship at Trickapore, soon to be vacant, which I should very much like, and which I have applied for. With the help of Ishwur (God), and your invaluable aid, I hope to procure it."

"I hope so!" hiccoughed the talented editor.

"Now let us strike a bargain," said the resplendent, waxing wondrous confidential. "You back up my cause for the tutorship, in the way of sugary paragraphs about my humble person

and fitness for the post, and I will further your interests with the Congress. What do you say to that?"

"It's a bargain!" declared Bhow Sahèb.

Bábá Sahèb nodded approval and satisfaction, and prepared to take his departure. As he was about to adjust his turban he caught sight of an incomplete manuscript on the editor's untidy table, and exclaimed: "What in the name of Shaitan (Satan) have you been wrestling with?"

The editor had, in the intervals of reducing his stock of "Pure Bráhmin manufacture," been "worrying" out a leading article.

"It's about the recent appointment to the Council, a subject which has never yet been done *justice* to by the vernacular press. I have been adding a few finishing touches."

The resplendent one smiled subtly, and casting a furtive glance at the remains of "Pure Bráhmin," quietly observed: "Ah! my friend, you must not put so many *finishing touches*, or you will spoil the whole *article*."

The convivial editor saw the point, grinned in painful appreciation, indicated the bottle with a gesture, and invited his visitor to a "few hairs of the dog."

"What! I?" exclaimed the thing of beauty. "Not for a lakh of rupees! And I urge you yourself to desist, or we may soon be deprived for good of your invaluable services. As for your article, if you composed it yesterday and are putting the finishing touches to it to-day, take my advice and throw it in the waste-paper basket. Turn your attention to the other appointment — the tutorship of Trickapore — which you will find far more remunerative."

With these significant words Bábá Sahèb glided out of the room, stumbled down the rickety stairs, and passed with dignified mien to his *shigram*. He was due to attend a High Festival on the top of Parbuttee Hill.

The editor of the *Scourge* was not pleased at being taken to task by one he considered a mere under-strapper, and looked upon his advice as bordering on insolence. He, however, did not wish to lose his friendly intercession with the Council, so decided upon a dual course.

"I'll butter his back in one part of the paper," muttered he, "and kick his shins in another part!"

Having obtained inspiration in a swig of "Pure Bráhmin," he launched into an editorial article on the vacancy at Trickapore, strongly

advocating Bábá Sahèb for the post; then he composed a strong leading article denunciatory of the pushfulness of young natives generally, heading it, "Prevalence of *Khatpat* (intrigue) at Government House." Thus, as it were, he ran with the hare while he hunted with the hounds.

It is in such a manner in India that corrupt office-seekers and sedition-mongers frequently make common cause.

Bábá Sahèb's words proved only too prophetic, for a few months after, the dipsomaniacal editor expired from a combination of phthisis and *delirium tremens*, induced by a long course of "Pure Bráhmin."

CHAPTER XIX

INFANTICIDE

In this country the destruction of young children is usually associated with the sordidness of procuring insurance money. Not so, however, in India, where the crime is the outcome either of superstition or domestic economy. It is a very ancient crime in the East, for it can be traced back in Arabia to before Mahomet's birth. It was first discovered to be prevalent in India about a century ago, principally among the warlike Rajputs; it is also believed to have been common among Mahomedans, and the Jhats and Bhurtpore chiefs. When Colonel Sleeman made his tour through Oudh in 1850 he found the practice of infant destruction or abandonment prevalent among the old Rajput families, and he was informed by Baktawar Singh that, in consequence of the existence of this custom most of the Rajput landed aristocracy were merely the adopted sons of their predecessors,

sometimes having been born of women of inferior grade.

When the evil was first discovered in Oudh Sir C. Wingfield, assisted by the *talukdars*, adopted measures to suppress it. These measures succeeded in part only, inasmuch as it prevails in places to the present day. The main cause of this crime is poverty, but it is also prompted by pride, avarice, and, as I have already stated, superstition. In order to fittingly celebrate a native wedding a good deal of expense must be incurred. There are pageantries, and festivities, and feasting, all sorts of rabble and hangers-on being entertained, which to a poor Hindu is a serious matter. If he does not observe such ceremonies, or observes them but in a niggardly manner, he will be visited with the contempt and obloquy of his neighbours — such is convention, even in the East. Much the same kind of thing prevails in the West, and we frequently see reckless and foolish expenditure at weddings among folk who obviously can ill afford it, merely for the purpose of making a "show," and impressing those about them with their supposed worldly affluence. It is not too much to suppose that in these ceremonies of trumpery sentiments the guests are far more amused and profited

than the principals, as in the East the hangers-on and rabble enjoy themselves more than the poor feast-givers.

Therefore the impecunious Hindu regards the advent of a daughter in his family circle with some alarm and foreboding, which may mean to him poverty in this world and possibly also that he may be put out of countenance in the hereafter. Death alone can remove such disabilities, and to death they have frequently appealed, the means adopted being either suffocation, starvation, or administering opium. Many thousands of female first-born must have so been destroyed in the past.

This evil, as evils usually do, led to another. It brought into being the trafficker in girls for the purposes of marriage. The Rajputs suffered from a paucity of female children among themselves with a consequent dearth of marriages, inasmuch as they might not marry outside their own caste. This brought into existence a regular organised system of child-stealing and purchase. The "dealer" posed as the purchaser, and received children from the age of three to thirteen which had been enticed away from their homes by the stealers, and housed them as members of his own family. The girls were

coached to reply fittingly to all questions that might be put as to their relationship, and the precocious youngsters became willing accomplices at the prospect of entering into a marriage with one of a much higher social grade than themselves, and the prospect of donning the coveted wedding thumb-ring. The next thing was to find a family where a wife was wanted, and this done a bargain was struck, and the wife supplied for a sum ranging from fifty to a hundred rupees. In order to satisfy convention that the proposed wife was really of the caste, which of course she really was not, a Bráhmin would be sent to the house, who was easily deceived, the whole ceremony being merely perfunctory. Then the marriage ceremony took place, accomplices performing the parts of the bride's "relations"—the deception being thus completed.

The Rajputs were not always deceived about the origin of their purchased brides, and a good deal of "winking" was done both by the bridegrooms and the officials. But the latter at length decided to take active measures to suppress the traffic, and embarked upon a series of raids upon the marriage "depôts." One of the first "seizures" by the police was that of five girls who had been kidnapped from a distant

district and sold into Thakoor families in Oudh. This produced information which led to other raids, productive of no fewer than fifty more cases. And so the police activity spread.

As may be supposed these measures were not taken without a good deal of opposition being encountered. On one occasion information was received that stolen girls were imprisoned in a house at a village on the banks of the Gumti, which was situated about 12 miles from the police headquarters. It was decided to make a raid at night, so accordingly the police set out after set of sun. It had been a sweltering hot day, but fortunately the scourging wind which had been howling all day had died down. It was ten o'clock when the police reached their destination, and by the light of the young moon they saw before them a wretched, nondescript dwelling-house, which was partly thatched and partly tiled. It was surrounded by a fence of thick bamboos, and the approach to the entrance was along a weed-grown irregular path. Police were stationed round the house in order to prevent any escape therefrom.

Then the officer in charge and some subordinates made their way into the "compound" or enclosure. Against the windowless wall of

the house was a mud-thatched lean-to. In this, beneath a creeper-covered trellis of gourds, were some sleepy cattle and a dirty, slimy well. Upon some straw, clothed in nothing but a tattered sheet and a goitre, was a wizened old hag. A light was kindled in a flat earthen saucer of oil, known as a *chiràg*, and the old woman roused from her slumbers, and commanded to show the police into the house. This she did reluctantly. In the first room they came to, in the middle of a number of grindstones and brass and earthen pots, were three girls, between the ages of five and ten years. They were sleeping on dirty fibre mats, which, however, were no less clean than the bodies that reposed upon them. The girls, however, were well nourished, and did not seem to be particularly distressed at their position. The eldest girl turned out to be a widow, and had returned from the home she had been sold into, to the "depôt" from which she had been purchased. The change, however, was one not distasteful to her, for, according to her own account, she had had a very unhappy married life, principally at the hands of her mother-in-law, with whom "her bread was sorrow and her drink tears." The proprietors of the

establishment were, unfortunately, away on similar matrimonial business, the old hag being left in charge. After a good deal of trouble they were captured and brought to justice.

Various theories are advanced to account for the dearth of women among the Rajputs. One is that a Bráhmin once prophesied to a Rajput king that his sovereignty would one day be destroyed through the agency of a female descendant. (Wherever you investigate in the world's history you find that women have been the proven or supposed cause of manifold troubles.) In order to guard against this evil, it is said, the Rajput monarch had all female infants destroyed. Another story goes that a Chowan prince, being persecuted by his son-in-law, deplored the fact that he was merely a father-in-law, and in order to save his descendants from such contempt had all the daughters of his family destroyed. A third story has it that a certain rajah, possessing a particularly beautiful daughter, and despairing of ever finding a suitable husband for her, had her, by the advice of a priest, put to death, and called upon all the members of his clan to do ditto. But I am afraid, taking into account the gift of vivid imagination possessed

by the Rajputs, and the necessity for an excuse or palliation of the heinous traffic to be advanced, these airy fairy narratives must be accepted with the customary precautionary pinch of condiment.

Infanticide, that is the actual slaying of female infants to avoid subsequent marriage expenses, can only be effectually remedied by altering the stupid marriage customs, and making the ceremony much cheaper. Even a better measure would be to introduce a custom something like that which prevails in France, so that the bridegroom contributed a *dot* or sum of money to pay the father-in-law's expenses. I do not know how immemorial custom in the East would receive such innovations. But why should not the bridegroom of the East, as he frequently does in the West, be made to stand the whole "racket"? Some thirty years ago Sir John Strachey took the matter up vigorously, declaring that "the British Government had borne too long with the abomination, and the time had come for them to show the world that these things must cease." Although the crime has not been altogether suppressed, it has been minimised. 1864 a native and broad-minded philan-

thropist, named Munshi Pyaree Lal, travelled far and wide on a mission which had for its object the inculcation into the minds of the natives the pressing necessity of reducing the cost of marriages, with a view to also reducing, if not altogether wiping out, the crime of infanticide. There is no doubt he did a lot of good.

There is no doubt that children are even now occasionally sacrificed in India from superstitious motives. Sir Edmund Cox tells me: "I have seen reports in the Punjab of the sacrifice of a Bráhmin child in order to bathe a childless woman with its blood, heated copper coins being used to burn magic marks on the body of the victim." Quite recently a case was heard in the Punjab courts, when three natives named respectively Pirbhu, Lekhu, and Sita Ram, were all sentenced to death for having murdered a child in the carrying out of a superstitious custom; two others, named respectively Kishnu, and a woman, Mussammát Mansa, were found guilty of being accessories, and sentenced to transportation for life. The story told was as follows. All the children of the woman had died, and she entertained an idea, born of her ignorance and superstition, that if the child of

another woman were killed, and she allowed to bathe in its blood, that her next child would live. The child, whose death was the substance of the charge, had lived with its parents at a place called Umballa, from which it was kidnapped by men employed for the task. Its disappearance naturally aroused suspicion, and search was made for it, but for a good time without avail. At length the skeleton of a child was found half a mile away under circumstances which pointed to it as being that of the missing child. All doubt was soon set at rest by one of the men, Sita Ram, making full confession to the district judge. The boy had, said he, been strangled by two of the men, stabbed in the feet and wrists, and his blood drawn off into a brass vessel. The body was then removed to the house of the woman's husband, certain incantations being delivered over it. The wife then smeared her body with the blood, and bathed herself under a bamboo tree in the garden. The while the others disposed of the body. The prisoner who confessed stated that all he received for the part he played in the gruesome business was three rupees (four shillings)!

Subsequently, as is not infrequently the case

in India, the prisoner retracted his statement, declaring that it had been extorted from him by the police by torture. His story was believed, however, and the sentences imposed as already related. It was a barbarous murder, for it was proved that the child had been kept gagged and drugged in confinement for thirty hours before being killed.

In some parts of India infanticide is regarded with abhorrence, as was made clear in the case of Malek Chand. One of their proverbs runs, "He who takes pleasure in sin and commits infanticide falls into the great hell called *Simirsa*"; another: "He who, standing in water repeats regularly the *gayater* may be freed from all sins but of infanticide"; and yet again: "By repeating ten scores of *gayaters* a man may be freed from the guilt of killing a Bráhmin, but never from that of infanticide."

Superstition survives with a lusty persistence in the East.

CHAPTER XX

WEIRD CRIMES

INDIA is the land of fantastic and fanatical crimes, the like of which can be found nowhere in the West. Almost inconceivable are some of these deeds to a Western mind, and in order to obtain some adequate notion of motive and conception it is necessary to possess some inner knowledge of the lives of these strange peoples. They will dare almost anything, and plan with consummate skill and dissimulation the carrying out of sanguinary crimes on an elaborate scale for a possible or probable profit that seems, to our notions, preposterously out of proportion to the enormity and risk of the undertaking. For motives of revenge, too, or through differences in creed and caste, they will commit the most unheard-of acts of violence. Family disputes, or vendettas, are also fruitful sources of diabolical and relentless crimes. Mr Arthur Gresham, a police official of Burma already referred to,

in a very interesting series of articles which appeared some time ago in the *Standard*, related the following extraordinary occurrence, which happened within his jurisdiction, and which he himself personally investigated.

One afternoon, about four o'clock, a man made his appearance in the local police station, having his hands tied, and proceeded to tell a story which the officials had some difficulty in crediting. They thought he must be either mad, or joking. Early in the morning of that same day, said he, he was invited by a man named Nga Pyu, with two friends of his, the narrator's, to go prawn-catching in a lake in the jungle, in which the succulent crustacean was supposed to be as plentiful as seeds in a paddy-field. The man agreed to participate in the proposed sport, and directed his son, a boy of ten, to carry the basket and net. Now this man, Nga Pyu, had the reputation in the village of being a bit of a magician, and on the way to the lake in question he told his companions that he had invented a new trick, which he would show them when they arrived at their destination. He was carrying a *dah*, and, as the others considered this a curious weapon to bring on a fishing expedition, they

asked him why he had brought it with him. He replied that it was to use in defence against any wild animals which they might, and probably would, encounter in the jungle.

With this explanation they seemed content, and proceeded on their journey. However, having travelled a considerable distance, and no lake appearing, Nga Pyu's companions halted and enquired how much further they would have to go. Nga Pyu replied somewhat evasively that if they wished he would show them the new trick where they then were, as it was a convenient spot, plenty of trees being near, and trees being necessary for his purpose. They agreed, and he proceeded to explain the trick. He said it would be necessary for each of his companions to submit to having his two thumbs tied together with the fibre of a certain plant which is unbreakable, be further tied to a tree-trunk with his forehead to the trunk, that he would then go to a spot some distance away and there work a charm, the men being subsequently released by fairy fingers. This may seem to denizens of the West a somewhat flimsy pretence by which to victimise full-grown men, not to say silly, but it should be borne in mind that these villagers were steeped

in superstition, the man had a reputation for being a wonder-worker, and the story, simple as it was, was one eminently calculated to appeal to them. However, they all agreed to be the instruments of his magic powers, and were fastened up in the manner described. The bound men, over the heads of whom Nga Pyu had made a few passes, were situated about a quarter of a mile away from each other, and out of sound and ear-shot of each other. Having fastened the last of the men, who was the narrator of the story, Nga Pyu disappeared, ostensibly for the purpose of working the spell.

For about half an hour the man waited to be released by the promised fairy fingers, but something apparently had gone wrong with the supernatural agency, for he remained as firmly bound as ever. He therefore endeavoured to release himself, but the fibre resisted all his efforts to free himself. He then bethought him to utilise his teeth—now experiencing considerable uneasiness of mind, and thinking no more of fairy fingers—and by this means he at length contrived to release his thumbs from the tree, although not from each other. He was, however, free to move away, and he at once made

his way towards that spot where he had witnessed the second of his companions fastened to a tree by the "magician." Arrived within sight of the tree he suddenly halted, nor ever advanced another inch! The terrible sight that met his gaze! Standing by the tree was Nga Pyu, wiping his bloody *dah* with grass, and upon the ground was the body of his companion, headless! At the moment of this terrible discovery the man's presence was discovered by the assassin, who at once made for him. The man incontinently plunged into the jungle and made for the town, with Nga Pyu, weapon in hand, hot upon his heels. The man with bound hands was at a disadvantage, but the knowledge that his life was at stake gave to his feet the wings of Mercury. He went headlong for the town, where he arrived torn and bleeding; and so precipitate had been his flight that he was unable to say how far Nga Pyu had followed him, or whether he had followed him at all.

That was the man's story. The man's hands were released, but as the brief Indian twilight was then rapidly merging into night, it was deemed impracticable to take the chase up at once. First thing in the morning, however, the European official, a sub-inspector, and four

police set out for the scene of the crime, the informant acting as guide. I should have mentioned before that the informant's little boy, already referred to, also accompanied the "fishing" party; and the father's distress at the probable fate of his child — which the police were forced to concur in—was painful to behold. They at length arrived at the spot where the trick had been explained, and bending their steps towards the left they beheld a number of cocoa-nut trees. Near these they discovered the headless body of the first victim. They then pushed on to the second position, and here a horrible sight met their view. The second victim's headless body was still fastened to the tree, and near by was also the headless body of the poor boy. The father gave way unrestrainedly to grief, which soon turned to rage, and snatching a *dah* from a policeman he vowed he would neither eat nor drink till he had found and killed the assassin. They, however, at length pacified him. They then returned to the town with the bodies for an inquest to be held upon them.

Scouts were sent out all round to try and find some traces of the assassin, and at length a woodman was found who had seen Nga Pyu

about three o'clock on the previous afternoon. Asking him where he was going, he was told to an aunt of his who resided at a certain village. This village was situated about 10 miles away, but thither, beneath a scorching sun, a party of police at once set off. The cottage was situated near a patch of jungle swamp, about a quarter of a mile in circumference. At first the aunt denied that she had seen her nephew for months, but when an officer raised the lid of an earthen *chattie*, and pointed out to the woman that she, living alone (she had no husband), had rice ready to cook for *two*, she confessed that he was hiding in the jungle. It appeared that he had seen *khaki* approaching the cottage 3 miles away, and had so retreated.

It was now nearing night, and therefore useless to attempt to search the jungle then, so a number of fires were built round the jungle, so that the fugitive could not escape without being seen. In the morning the police *posse*, headed by a guide, pushed into the jungle along the best available path. For some time they were unsuccessful, but at length they heard a pushing sound in a clump of black holly. They called upon the man to surrender, or they would fire

into the clump. In response to this he appeared, unarmed, and was handcuffed.

It is hardly conceivable that this atrocious crime was prompted by no deeper motive than trumpery jealousy. It appeared that all the victims had, at a *pwe*, or native dance, talked and joked rather freely with Nga Pyu's wife, who was rather young and pretty, and this was his revenge.

Such is one of the phases of the Eastern mind. I follow with another.

In the West we sometimes hear of extreme cunning upon the part of a criminal or criminals, but I think you will search the records in vain to find the equal of the following. One night a man was awakened from his slumbers by hearing a peculiar noise proceeding from one of the walls of his house. He listened. The noise went on, the sound being clearly that of some one endeavouring to effect an entrance into his residence. Burglars! Quietly he aroused other inmates of the house, and cautiously crept towards the place whence the noise proceeded. The burglars had succeeded in making a hole in the wall large enough to admit a man's body, through which, in fact, the lower portion of a man's body had already appeared, and was

working its way into the room. By voices they heard they knew that several other men were on the outside. Promptly they rushed forward and seized the extremities of the intruder, to which they clung tenaciously. Those outside, apparently correctly guessing what had happened, grasped their confederate by the shoulders, which were still outside, and thence ensued a kind of tug-o'-war between those inside and those outside, the burglar between forming the rope.

For some time this contest, accompanied by sundry bloodthirsty exclamations and oaths, lasted, neither gaining or losing. But this condition of *statu quo ante* was becoming momentarily more perilous to those without, for at any time the police might arrive. At last, however, those inside felt the resistance without slacken, and at length give way altogether, followed by retreating footsteps. They knew then that the prisoner was theirs. When, however, they came to examine him they found he was a headless prisoner, he having been decapitated! But what was stranger still, they could not find his head anywhere.

The explanation of this remarkable sanguinary deed is, the robbers finding that it was impossible to rescue their comrade, and realising that if he

were taken and recognised it would probably lead to their own arrest, cut off his head and carried it away with them, so that he might not be recognised. As a matter of fact the others never were traced.

When a reward is offered for the arrest of a much-wanted criminal in India, the native police spare no pains, nor shirk any unpleasant duty, in order to earn the money. On one occasion, the head of a gang of dacoits, who had given a great deal of trouble, was so advertised for, the reward being payable for the man's apprehension, dead or alive. One evening, a police official drove up to a local police-station, when a native officer hurried out carrying in his hand something done up in linen. This he presented to the European officer, who, removing the covering was horrified to behold a human head, with staring eyes, and blood-besmeared face. It was literally the head of the dacoit. He had been found, had resisted, and been slain. The reward was earned. Although this cannot strictly be classified as a "crime," yet it is weird enough, and in that respect deserves to rank with them.

A short time ago, a traveller by the Grand Trunk Road, in the Etah district, carrying

some bags of money, finding himself somewhat benighted, put up at a police-station, as he thought for safety. He explained matters to the native sub-inspector, and asked to be allowed to sleep at the station, as he feared if he continued his journey he might be attacked by dacoits. The sub-inspector gave him the desired permission, and provided him with a *bistar*, or pallet-bed, on which to sleep, at the same time advising him to put his money-bags under his head. He did so, and had not been upon the bed very long when he heard the inspector and his subordinates—who doubtless thought him asleep — planning to murder him. The inspector was directing his subordinates to have a grave ready dug that should be large enough to hold the victim and his bed, and that he, the inspector, would see to the rest when he returned from his evening meal. The men then dispersed. Watching his opportunity — he having during this interview feigned sleep—the traveller crept out of the station, carrying his money-bags with him, and climbed a neighbouring shady tree. Then a singular thing happened. The inspector returned to the station, his assistants having gone to dig the grave, and finding the traveller absent

concluded that he had resumed his journey, and dismissed the projected crime. He then laid himself down on the bed on which the traveller had so recently sought rest, and dozed off.

The assistants, who had finished the grave, their operations having been watched by the man in the tree, returned also to the station where they saw the figure of, as they supposed, the traveller still upon the bed. They decided to despatch him without waiting for the inspector's return, and it was not till they had struck the fatal blow that they discovered their mistake. Adapting themselves to circumstances, they proceeded to bury the body of the would-be murderer in the grave prepared for the intended victim. A curious reversal of things! The man in the tree saw all these things, but never budged an inch until a European officer happened to come along next morning, when he descended from his eyrie and revealed the whole affair. The men were arrested and sent up for trial. Upon such trifles do human lives sometimes hang.

But I think we have had enough horrors for one chapter.

PART III

PRISONS AND PRISONERS

CHAPTER XXI

PRISON DISCIPLINE—CIVIL OFFICERS

JAIL life in India is quite distinct from prison life in this country. The jails themselves are also widely different from the prisons in England. Speaking generally, criminals in India are treated very humanely, enjoy a large measure of freedom, and are offered every incentive to retrieve their good names. The jail discipline in India, if it errs at all, does so on the side of laxity and leniency. There are no such savage and brutal scenes enacted within the walls of Eastern houses of bondage, by merciless and ignorant taskmasters, as were depicted, and doubtless then existed, in the pages of Charles Reade's "Never Too Late to Mend." Indeed, at the present day, the inmates of our prisons are an infinitely more

miserable and menacing body of criminals than are to be found in any of the thousands of prisons which exist throughout the vast Asiatic continent. Granted the difference between the characters of the two populations—and the difference, moreover, from an administrative point of view, is certainly not in favour of those in the East, as will soon readily be perceived — the conduct of our prisons in England as a whole compares unfavourably with the conduct of the jails in India. I may here perhaps be allowed to parenthesise that all prisons in the East are called "jails," and always spelt as I have spelt the word, so that in drawing a comparison between the two I have employed the comparative designations.

As I have said, there are hundreds of prisons in India, and they may be briefly summarised as district, subsidiary, and central jails. The ordinary "lock-up" I have previously described. The penal settlement I shall deal with in the succeeding and concluding section of this work. Now, although there exist so many jails in India there is much less variety in the system than is to be found in the prison system of this country. This is due to the uniformity of the fundamental laws of administration, also of their simplicity,

conciseness, and practicability. For instance, there is no separate jail for female convicts, each jail having its own separate woman's wing, with, of course, female officers. The insane are first conveyed to an asylum, where for a certain period they are kept and watched; if at the end of that period they are considered fit for ordinary treatment they are transferred to a jail. There are reformatory schools for young offenders, where they may be sent instead of to jail, at the discretion of the magistrate. There exists imprisonment for debt, but it is managed on much better lines than it is here. A debtor may be arrested at the instance of a petitioning creditor, and lodged in jail, but he has a very good chance of proving himself honest, if he should be so. His realisable assets, if any, are annexed, and a receiver appointed. A schedule of his indebtedness is made out, and each claim must be proved. Supposing he has given every facility in his power to this end, and furnishes reasonable security for his reappearance, he is at once released, and his affairs in due time adjusted. If, however, he is proved to be a would-be swindler, he is of course suitably and deservedly dealt with.

Speaking structurally, the jails of India vary

a good deal. The district and subsidiary jails are not as a rule very interesting in appearance, consisting, as they frequently do, of just a large, square-walled enclosure, the entrance facing the high road, and containing smaller enclosures with a variety of long-tiled sheds, in which the prisoners sleep and work. There are also smaller apartments for the accommodation of the guards, and for the confinement of refractory prisoners. But there is one characteristic which is common to them all, namely, they are scrupulously clean, and, unlike the prisons in this country, there is a total absence of oppression or gloom. Sometimes one may come across a jail with quite an inviting exterior, with graceful domed turrets at the corners, and gay flower-beds in front, the whole being painted a cheerful yellow. So distinctly Oriental is it, that it might well form an illustration in a fantastic story of Eastern imagery. The prisoners, too, are for the most part a contented, amenable, and tractable body of men, taking evident interest in their interesting occupations, with nothing about them of that brooding, sullen air, which, alas! is so frequently to be seen among the prisoners in this country.

Speaking generally, the officers in the jails

of India of any importance consist of the following: A superintendent (there are no "governors" of jails in India, the head of the jail usually being a medical man), a jailer, deputy jailers, assistant jailers, apprentice jailers, clerks, hospital assistant, compounder (chemist), head warders, assistant warders, and female warders. There are also what are known as "convict warders"; but this is a feature peculiar to India, and I shall describe it in the succeeding chapter. In the smaller jails the superintendent is subject to the supervision of the district magistrate, collector, or deputy-commissioner, as he is variously called, who is supposed to visit the jail once a day. Beyond all these, in point of authority, is the Inspector-General of jails, who is a kind of visiting justice, and who is supposed to keep a vigilant eye on all the jails within his jurisdiction, and pay them visits at certain stated intervals. He decides on the administration of corporal punishment in the case of insubordinate prisoners.

Although the superintendent is answerable to the magistrate, he is also in direct communication with the Inspector-General. He is also supposed to be sufficiently well acquainted with the language of the district to be able to con-

verse with the prisoners; he must be a man of tact, be thoroughly acquainted with the rules and Acts relating to the jail system, and be answerable for their due observance. If he fail in any of his duties, or misconducts himself, the magistrate has power to remove him. He has full control over his subordinate officers, and in case of an offence committed by any of these, which seems to merit dismissal, he must proceed in the following manner: An enquiry must be held, at which the accused should be present, evidence for and against being taken, and recorded in writing. If the charge is proved, or there is sufficient evidence for moral conviction, the accused is suspended, and ordered to produce a written defence within three days. Upon the receipt of this defence, or should the defence not be put in, the superintendent must record a decisive opinion. A dismissed officer has a right of appeal to the Inspector-General.

The petitions of discharged native police officials for reinstatement are often quaint documents. They are usually put together by native professional "petition writers," whose knowledge of English is not always what it might be. In Burma once an official who gloried in the name of "Bhaguatiwari" was dismissed for some derelic-

tion of duty, and sent in such a petition. (By the way, native names are sometimes staggering in their length. A new publication has just been started in Madras, the editor of which is named "G. Kothandaramayya, M.A." It is one of those names you have to take in instalments—a syllable a day.) The petition of Bhag—the petition in question ran as follows:

"The humble petition of Bhaguatiwari most respectfully showeth.

"That on night of 19th inst., at about ten o'clock, went round to detect gambling gang at S—— quarter along with other sepoys and sub-inspector, altogether six in number.

"That when sub-inspector whistled me, went to the spot and attempted to arrest gamblers, their number was approximately about fifty, but on our arrival, the gang dispersed, and I caught hold one man, he was trying to slept off out of my hand, and entended to enduce me to him off, making over the pice (small bronze coin) to my hand, so that when the petitioner stretched his hand to get that pice he may get a chance to be shift off, but I did not do so, and never let my hold of his hand and hairs let off. I the meantime that man put the copper in my pocket, and the petitioner marched station with

the man and the pice, and made over to sub-inspector, in presence of other sepoys.

"That your petitioner with great reluctance heard on the 20th instant that he was put out of the list of sepoys, but no definite order communicating to him. This as well as the grounds for his being treated so, although the petitioner prayed for that. As in duty bound shall ever pray, your petitioner."

The superintendent is answerable for the whole executive management of the jail, in all matters relating to internal economy, discipline, labour, expenditure, punishment, and control generally, subject to the authority of his superiors. He has authority to deal with all subordinate prisoners, the punishments inflicted being entered in a special register. Every year, quarter, and month he must submit bills and returns, and every six months he must take stock and make a valuation of all machinery, plant, tools, raw materials, manfactured articles, live and dead stock, belonging to the jail. He is supposed to be in the jail as soon after sunrise as possible, when his first duty is to release time-expired convicts, should there be any, with due observance of the rules regarding return of their private

property, and the grant of subsistence allowance for the journey to their homes.

The superintendent must keep a constant watch on the jail receipts and expenditure, see that the registers and books are written up, that the cash balances agree, and that outstandings are not allowed to accumulate. He is answerable for any defalcations which may be the result of his negligence. He must take care to procure grain in the cheapest market, and to store it carefully for the use of the prisoners, and by weighing the prisoners' food before and after cooking that they get their proper rations. He must hold a parade of prisoners every Sunday morning, or upon some other convenient day during the week, receive complaints, and enquire into them. He must also see that the prisoners are properly classified, with a view to caste, and that their food is distributed accordingly, that they have proper clothes, and are duly weighed periodically, it being the aim of the authorities to discharge a prisoner weighing more than when he was received.

Altogether it must be admitted that the post of superintendent is no sinecure.

All officers beneath superintendent have to furnish what is called a "security bond," for

the due performance of all duties required of them, and they are bound by the conditions and penalties set forth in the bond. These bonds range from five hundred rupees down to one hundred and fifty rupees, according to the grade of the officer. The amount must be deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank, and the depositor must sign a letter addressed to the Postmaster undertaking not to make any claim on the Post Office Savings Bank for the principal of the sum deposited, except with the express written sanction of the officer to whom the security is pledged, not to object to the payment by the bank of the principal to such person on his claiming it, and not to make any claim for interest after interest has ceased to accrue owing to such payment. It is the duty of the superintendent to see that such a bond is duly executed. If an officer obtains leave of absence, and appoints a substitute to act for him in his absence, the substitute will have to execute a similar bond. The officers may not engage in any other occupation while in the Service.

The junior officials come closer and more frequently in contact than their superiors. They must know English, also the language of their charges. They must be strict about the intro-

duction of contraband articles, being careful to search the thatch of workshops. They must pay surprise visits to the jail, after eight at night.

The female warders are appointed by the superintendent, and they must be of good moral character, and pass a medical examination to prove their fitness for the work. If no female warders are available, the work is entrusted to old and trustworthy male warders.

CHAPTER XXII

PRISON DISCIPLINE—CONVICT OFFICERS

In Indian prison administration there prevails a system of promotion which might well be studied by the Prisons Commissioners of this country. That is promotion, by virtue of exemplary behaviour, to positions of trust and importance in the prison. It will, of course, be a moot point with many as to whether such a system could be successfully introduced into our prisons, although there exist many reasons why it should be. Let me briefly explain how the system works in India.

Convict officers consist of watchmen and overseers, and by being so appointed they become public servants within the meaning of the Indian Penal Code. One of the first things which suggests itself to the ordinary mind, in connection with this arrangement is collusion, and the next oppression. Now these contingencies have also presented themselves to the official

mind, and they have therefore been legislated for. Every convict officer is enjoined, and made thoroughly to understand, that he must on no account use unnecessary violence towards prisoners, under pain of severe penalties. If convicted of such an infringement of the rules he will at once be degraded to the position of an ordinary convict, and forfeit all benefits previously earned. If he should connive at the introduction of forbidden articles, or wilfully or negligently allow a prisoner to escape, he may be prosecuted before a magistrate under special sections provided for such offences in the Code. It is his duty, he is made clearly to understand, to do all in his power to prevent escapes. Now if we enquire into how a convict qualifies for such a position we shall be better able to appreciate what he sacrifices by a dereliction of duty.

In order to become a night watchman, and do sentry duty in a ward of associated prisoners, a convict must have only a short term yet to serve. He must belong to the A class, that is to say, he must be a first offender, never having been convicted before; he must have been well-behaved, industrious, have earned at least one-fourth of the maximum number of

marks, be physically fit to do two hours' night duty in addition to the ordinary day labour, and must not have been convicted of any grave crime, such, for instance, as thuggee, drugging, or unnatural offence. The superintendent has the appointing of the convict officers. The duties of the watchmen consist of keeping watch over the sleeping wards of the jail. When the prisoners have been locked up at night the jailer and head warder arrange the hours of duty of the respective watchmen, who are informed of their appointment to duty at the evening parade. Particulars of the appointments are also entered in a lock-up note book, also on a blackboard suspended in the ward.

Each convict watchman is on duty two hours at a time, the first watch beginning at 8 P.M., and the last concluding at 4 A.M. As far as possible the changes correspond with the changes of sentries. It is the duty of the watchman to be constantly moving about in the ward, to prevent any prisoner leaving his place or committing any breach of the jail rules; also, by occasionally counting, to satisfy himself that all the prisoners are safe. If anything serious occurs he should summon the guard or jailer, so that enquiries may be made. He must also

see that all night lamps are kept properly lighted, and if any convict wishes to visit the latrine he, the convict, must obtain the permission of the watchman, who should report in the morning who have been accorded such permission. The convict night watchman's official capacity is indicated by a band of blue cloth sewn on the right sleeve. He is exempted from having his head shaved or beard clipped, and from wearing neck-rings or tickets and ankle-rings. His remuneration is one extra mark per day, provided he carries out his duties satisfactorily. Every Sunday a parade of convict watchmen is held, after the regular parade, when the best among them are selected for further promotion, or those who have committed themselves are punished. During the day convict watchmen occupy the position of ordinary prisoners. When a night watchman's duty expires he must call the next watchman, and with him count over the prisoners.

From the most successful and trustworthy convict watchmen are selected the convict overseers. Such appointments are noted on the convict's "history ticket," and is also entered in the superintendent's order book. The number of overseers must not exceed 10 per cent. of

the entire jail population—two to every twenty. The overseer takes his orders from the superintendent or other jail official, and it is his duty to assist the warders of his gang in superintending the prisoners at work, conducting them to parades, maintaining discipline and silence, and keeping them in safe custody. Also to share with the watchmen the duty of guarding the wards by inside patrol at night, and to be responsible for the efficiency of the watch. His hours for watching begin when those of the ordinary watchman end, namely, 4 o'clock A.M. He also keeps the "history tickets" of the gangs, escorts prisoners about the jail, and conducts them to the hospital when necessary.

The overseer must also frequently count the prisoners made over to him, to see that the number is correct, search them and prevent them receiving forbidden articles. Supposing such articles to be found upon a prisoner, which fact has not already been reported by the overseer, the latter will be held responsible for it, and punished. He should give notice of any breaches of jail rules, plots, or conspiracies that may come to his knowledge, whether amongst prisoners of his own or any other gangs. He has to see that the prisoners industriously per-

form their tasks, do not leave their proper places or communicate with each other in an irregular manner, and that they keep file when moving from place to place. He must report all cases of sickness, see that the prisoners properly fold up and arrange their bedding in the morning before the wards are open; that they wash themselves and their clothes, and keep their neck-rings and leg-irons (these adornments will be described, and other prison details given in a subsequent chapter) clean and bright, and that they do not barter, alter, or damage their clothing; and assist in quelling any outbreak, and defend any jail official in case of assault.

The overseer wears a cap, tunic, and knicker-bockers of white cotton, with a belt 3 inches wide secured by a buckle, the belt being made of two stripes of blue and yellow cloth, each $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and sewn together, the blue being placed uppermost. He also wears a brass badge in front on which is inscribed the name of the jail, the title "Overseer," and a number. It is arranged that the oldest overseer always has the lowest number. He has no arms of any kind, not even being allowed to carry a cane.

As in the case of the watchmen they are paraded once a week, when those who have

deserved well of their superiors are accorded praise, those who have done ill are punished. The position of convict overseer is one calculated to be much coveted by most prisoners, inasmuch as he wears a distinctive dress, which is a badge of the opposite of servility, is exempt from bearing about his person any mark of abasement, undergoes no labour other than that entailed by his official duties, enjoys exceptional earning capacities for remission, may write to and receive letters from his friends at comparatively frequent intervals, and is altogether allowed considerable latitude and freedom. His fall, in case of dereliction of duty, is consequently correspondingly great. For minor offences he may lose a number of marks, be visited with a change of badge, fetters, gunny-clothing, with other forms of temporary degradation, penal labour or confinement in cells, or penal diet. For more serious offences he may be reduced to the rank of an ordinary watchman or convict, have fetters imposed, or even flogged. If he is flogged he will in all probability be permanently degraded, and removed to another jail.

Such are the conditions under which a system of official promotion is conducted, not by any means unsuccessfully, throughout the vast prison,

or jail system of India. Another revolutionary feature, namely, inter-marriage of convicts, which is peculiar to India, though foreign to this country, I shall discuss under the heading of "Transportation," yet another feature which survives in the East, although obsolete here.

Would it be practicable and beneficial to introduce a system of convict officers into the prison administration of this country? Why not? Its drawbacks would not be more serious here than in India. The ultimate object is, of course, the same, namely, to induce the better behaved and more capable of the inmates to adopt a more worthy mode of living, to instil into them the advantages to be derived by a systematic, industrious, and honest life, at the same time, by means of inflicting disabilities and punishments for backsliding, throwing into bold relief the contrast between the crooked and the straight career. You would also be utilising some valuable material, and reducing the cost of administration. Think of the difficulties to be encountered in the conduct of such a system in India, with its many castes and invulnerable prejudices! Yet it succeeds in spite of these, and why not here?

True, the jail system of India is in its entirety

different from ours, being far less repressive and crushing, more enlightened and lifting, and in these respects we need very much to follow in their wake. Our prison system as a whole is a survival, and a somewhat inexplicable survival, of an ancient, and in other respects long-forgotten period of social savagery. Much of the ignorance, corruption, and cruelty of those times we have happily lived down, although the spirit of the age still prevails in no small measure in the brutality and benighted methods of dealing with criminals. The reasons for this are to be found in the character of our social laws, which have ever been framed more with a view to the aggrandisement of the well-placed than the lifting of the lowly. In the eyes of legislators criminals have, for many years, been a negligible quantity, they have had too much other interesting work to attend to, to be troubled with such a "dirty job" as cleansing the criminal stable. It will, of course, have to be cleansed, or allowed to corrupt the whole social fabric.

As a matter of fact, this system of extending privileges to well-behaved and tractable prisoners does exist in a quasi form in some of our prisons. Prisoners deserving well of their custodians are dealt with leniently, and allowed a wider latitude

and measure of freedom than those who purposely give trouble, and without violating the letter of the "standing orders." I have already referred, in my previous work ("The Story of Crime"), to the genial Scottish bailiff of Dartmoor who said to the writer, "We help our old pals when we can," and gave proofs. The spirit of the whole system is contained in that observation. I know it was true, for I had ocular demonstration of it. Supposing they had not worn the garb of servitude, you would not have known the farm hands from ordinary labourers. The man who was rearing some motherless lambs was a firm favourite with the officers, with whom he mixed and conversed freely.

How many steps, I would ask, is it from this condition to that of official recognition, as prevails in India? Are our countrymen less amenable to discipline and reason, more blind to the advantages to be derived by good behaviour, than the natives of India? Does any man seriously think or say that? One of the most difficult things to accomplish in this country, in the way of legislation, is to initiate a measure of relaxation in the conduct of our prisons. The very idea of treating a criminal

as an ordinary weak human being is, in the minds of some, of many, ill-informed individuals tantamount to midsummer madness. The sooner we shed such shallow old prejudices the better for all concerned.

An employer will promote an office-boy who has done well by him—why not a well-behaved convict by the State?

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RECEPTION OF A PRISONER

A CONVICTED criminal in India goes straight to the jail in which it is intended he should be confined, according to the nature of his sentence, whether it be simple imprisonment, hard labour, or rigorous imprisonment. If he is to be transported he is held in rigorous imprisonment until he is transported from the mainland. It is within the power of a judge to order a prisoner a certain period of solitary confinement, and if this is awarded the prisoner is kept in cellular confinement within the precincts of the jail to which he is drafted. That is the most trying part of the sentence, as it is in all forms of imprisonment, and is the Indian criminal's period of incarceration known here as his "separates." A prisoner may subsequently be transferred to another jail, for some reason or another, when an official transfer form must be made out and taken with him.

Prisoners are admitted into jails between the time of opening and the hour of lock-up, which is sunset. If prisoners arrive after this they will not be admitted into the ordinary convict wards without a special order from a judge or magistrate. Without such an order the prisoners will be confined, for the time being, in what is called the "under-trial ward," in which civil prisoners are kept, such, for instance, as insolvent debtors. No jailer must admit a prisoner unless he receives with him a duly made out warrant, also a separate warrant in English; he must also satisfy himself that the prisoner is indeed the person indicated in the warrant. A warrant must be absolutely correct and explicit in its definitions, and if it fails to state whether the imprisonment is to be simple or rigorous the matter will be referred back to the Inspector-General. For all such mistakes the court issuing the warrant is held responsible. Where a prisoner is sentenced to several terms of imprisonment for several offences the sentences, unless otherwise stipulated, will run in succession, and he will serve the aggregate time stated.

Immediately a prisoner is admitted the date of his release is fixed, and an entry made to that effect by the jailer in the "release diary."

This entry is, of course, subject to amendment or entire cancellation in consequence of subsequent happenings, such, for instance, as reduction of sentence or attempt to escape. A prisoner has the right of appeal during his confinement, just as he has in this country, although the Indian convict does not avail himself of the privilege so industriously as the English convict does, for obvious reasons. A prisoner's sentence is calculated by the calendar year or month, the day of sentence and the day of release both being considered as days of imprisonment. Suppose a convicted prisoner appeals, he will be released on bail pending the hearing of his appeal. If he lose on appeal, then the period he has been at large on bail will be added to the original sentence, together with any other period of delay which may have been caused by his behaviour, and the date on which the sum of these periods will elapse, counting from the date of conviction, is the date of expiration of sentence. In the case, however, of a prisoner being committed to jail in default of furnishing security, the period he is out on bail will be counted as part of his sentence. Suppose a prisoner is sentenced for two periods (a prisoner may be convicted on different counts of an

indictment, each of which is punishable with a separate sentence) and he appeals against the first, in which he is successful, then the second sentence will date from the prisoner's committal to jail in consequence of the first sentence.

If on appeal a sentence is altered in character, that is, the section under which it is imposed changed, or in the event of a modification of the sentence, then the term finally agreed upon will date from the first day of imprisonment under the original sentence. When a prisoner is sentenced, either on the same day or on following dates, to two or more sentences to be served consecutively, the date of release is calculated as though the sum of the terms was awarded in one sentence. Suppose, for example, a prisoner is sentenced on the 21st June 1895 to one year's imprisonment, and for another offence, subsequently to a further term of one year, the period to commence from the expiration of the first sentence, he would be released on the 20th June 1897, not on the 19th June 1897.

The Indian jail authorities have a very nice method of dealing with terms of imprisonment in default of payment of a fine. When a prisoner, having been sentenced to imprison-

ment either wholly or in part in default of paying a fine, the date of his release is entered in the "release diary" both as though the fine had been paid (when partly in default), and as though it had not. The prisoner has the option of paying a portion of the fine, and so purchasing a corresponding remission of his sentence; if he does so, the date of his release is accordingly altered in the diary. As an example: If a prisoner be sentenced on 1st January to six months' imprisonment and a fine of three hundred rupees, and it be ordered that if the fine be not paid he be imprisoned for a further period of six months, then, supposing that the prisoner, immediately on conviction, pays one hundred rupees, the date of release will be first fixed at 31st October (that is to say, six months plus four months, the equivalent of the fine unpaid) and entries will be made in the "release diary" on 30th June and 31st October. If he afterwards pays another one hundred rupees, the date will be changed to 31st August, and on his paying the whole, the fact will be noted opposite the entry on the 30th June.

If a prisoner who is sentenced to a fine and in default to imprisonment for a certain number

of months, pays any part of his fine, the remissions for the payment will be calculated in calendar months, and not in days. Any fraction of a month obtained by such calculation is reduced to days. A fraction of a day is not counted. As an example: If a prisoner is sentenced, say, on the 15th July to six months' imprisonment and to pay a fine of three hundred rupees, or in default of payment to serve six months' further imprisonment, and he pays sixty-three rupees, the calculation is made as follows: Rupees $\frac{63}{300} \times$ six months $= \frac{126}{100} = 1\frac{26}{100}$ month. The date of release, deducting one month, would fall on 14th June.

As the month preceding June has 31 days, the $\frac{26}{100}$ of a month would be calculated on 31 days $\frac{26}{100} \times 31 = \frac{806}{100} = 8\frac{6}{100}$ days. Here the remission for payment of sixty-three rupees is one month and eight days. If the prisoner had been sentenced on the 15th June, instead of 15th July, the calculation of the $\frac{26}{100}$ of a month would have to be made on a 30 days' month, because from any date in April to the same date in May is 30 days as follows: $\frac{26}{100} \times 30 = \frac{78}{10} = 7\frac{8}{10}$th days, so that in that case the remission would be only one month and seven days.

If such fine or any portion of it were paid

immediately on conviction, the magistrate issuing the warrant would endorse upon it the fact of such payment. If a prisoner is sentenced to a term of imprisonment in default of payment of fine is also, either at the same time or subsequently, sentenced to another term or to other terms of imprisonment, the imprisonment in default of payment of fine is kept in abeyance till the expiration of all the absolute sentences of imprisonment, and would be wholly or partially annulled by the payment of the fine, in whole or part, before that period, or so long as imprisonment continues. For example: A prisoner is sentenced on the 9th June 1895 to two years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of fifty rupees, or in default six months' imprisonment; on the 17th July of the same year he is sentenced on another count to an additional imprisonment for eighteen months; and on the 6th October 1896 he is sentenced on another charge to an additional imprisonment for two years. The sentence of six months' imprisonment in default of the payment of fine of five rupees would begin from the 9th December, 1900 (the date of expiration of all the absolute sentences of imprisonment being 8th December), and would be annulled wholly or partially by

the payment of the fine, in whole, or in part, before that period, or so long as the imprisonment continued. This rule covers the case of a prisoner whose first sentence of imprisonment is only in default of payment of fine. The substantive sentences of imprisonment subsequently passed count from the date of the first sentence, and the imprisonment in default of payment of fine takes effect last, although a portion of it may have been already served when the substantive sentences were awarded. Unless the imprisonment is of a different denomination to that of the substantive sentences, in which case the imprisonment in default of payment of fine must be completed before the substantive sentence of imprisonment takes effect.

A jailer is not entitled to receive fines, but must refer any persons tendering them either to the magistrate who imposed the fine, or, if in a sessions court, to the magistrate of the district in which the fine was so imposed.

When a prisoner is received he is given a number, which, with the date of his admission, is entered on his warrant, and signed by the jailer. These warrants are kept in monthly bundles, under lock and key, in charge of the

jailer. On admission a prisoner is thoroughly searched, every article of clothing, money, jewellery, or documents taken from him. Female prisoners are, of course, searched by female officers. This search is very minute, for your Eastern malefactor has curious and unexpected places for concealing things. They are made to wash themselves and their clothes, which latter are often boiled before being stored. They are given a suit of jail attire, and the following morning they are seen by the medical officer. Their "history ticket" is examined, which contains very minute particulars concerning themselves and their careers. The prisoner's "serial number" is inscribed upon a wooden tab, which is suspended round the neck by a ring. The jail number series runs from one to ten thousand. He is classified according to his caste, and will become officially known in such a style as, "Prisoner No. 236 A, Rup Ram."

In case of rigorous imprisonment the head is shaved, Hindus being allowed to retain the *chutiah* or *shika*. Beards and moustaches are clipped, the beard of Mohammedans being left an inch in length. The barbering is done by specially appointed prisoners. Where such pro-

ceedings are justly offensive or degrading to certain classes of prisoners—particularly Sikhs and Mughs, who are exempt—it may be dispensed with. The hair is allowed to grow a month before release. The wooden label worn round the neck by means of an iron ring of galvanised wire, which is large enough to avoid compression, but not large enough to pass over the head, bears the register number, as already stated, the date of admission, and the length of sentence, and, on the back, the date of expiration. As, for example,

"1913-B
24-1-95
3 y. 6 m."

In the B class prisoners also wear a ring or bracelet round the left wrist, and for every previous conviction beyond two a smaller ring is fastened on to it. Some prisoners are, prior to release, transferred to a local prison in the district in which they lived. These are called "police-registered prisoners," and in the registers against their entries is inscribed, $\frac{P.R.}{T}$, that is to say, "police-registered—transfer."

If a prisoner is recognised as an old offender a red mark is made at the back of his warrant.

Upon admission the state of a prisoner's education is ascertained, and entered in the register as either, "Able to read and write," "Able to read only," or "Illiterate," as the case may be. An abstract of the rules is made and carefully read over and explained to the newly-arrived prisoners, copies, both in English and the vernacular, being hung up in every ward.

All these particulars must be obtained, and the entries made in the registers and diaries, by the end of the day succeeding that of admission. Then the warrants and the prisoners are brought before the superintendent, who reads over the list of each prisoner's property as set forth upon the warrant, and obtains the prisoner's confirmation of it. And so the prisoners are duly installed to undergo their term of incarceration.

In the succeeding chapter we shall get a glimpse of how they fair afterwards.

CHAPTER XXIV

A CENTRAL JAIL

LET us pay a visit to one of the largest jails on the mainland, called a "central jail," and equivalent to our penal prisons. There are in India what are called "non-official" prison visitors, men of some position who undertake the honorary task of making periodical visits of inspection to various prisons. The idea is decidedly a good one, for a non-official opinion is often of considerable value on an official subject. Moreover, a person occupying an *ex-officio* position can often see faults and suggest remedies that might escape the attention of the officially-bound observer, as the looker-on at a game of skill sees chances that are hidden from the players themselves. But it is as ordinary visitors, prompted solely by curiosity, chastened somewhat by a desire for reform, that we are going to pay a visit to a

central jail. For this purpose we have already obtained the necessary special permit.

Imagine a large barred gateway, giving on to a huge jail about the size of a small town. Before passing through an inner gateway we have to sign a visitor's book, and are then taken in hand by a small escort of warders, specially told off to be our guides, philosophers, and friends. The same system of locking and unlocking prevails as obtains here, and before one gate is opened the previous one is securely fastened. The jail consists of two large enclosures, several open spaces, a separate one for the female prisoners, and a collection of sheds and buildings. Around the whole is an outer wall. The jail is situated on a tract of desert land, and is consequently completely isolated. There is accommodation for two thousand inmates, and they invariaby have their full complement. The buildings are constructed of burnt brick, the walls of sun-dried brick, the latter being kept in repair by the convicts, but the former by the Public Works Department.

Much care has to be exercised in apportioning the various duties of the establishment, so that caste prejudices may not be disturbed. Thus, for ordinary menial or scavenging work

MONTGOMERY CENTRAL JAIL—ENTRANCE TO TWO FACTORIES

the lowest castes are employed, while the others, as far as possible, are employed in the trade or industry with which they may happen to be familiar. If they have no trade they are taught one. The principal occupations engaged in are weaving and agriculture. Some very beautiful carpets are turned out by the convicts, which may be purchased by visitors to the prison. Anything from sixteen to twenty-five shillings will purchase a woollen carpet a yard square, according to the character of the work; better quality fabrics run much higher, while silk carpets are very costly.

The implements of the Indian native weaver are somewhat primitive, although he manipulates them with considerable skill. A number of men sit before the frame on which a carpet is to be constructed, pulling the various coloured threads from balls above their heads, adjusting them in correct positions to work out the pattern, their tools being a small curved knife and a wooden fork. A man stands behind them, holding a pattern book in his hand, and from this he reads off the pattern, which the weavers follow with their work, placing all the colours in their true positions. You would not, of course, understand what is being said,

although you can see and understand what is being done.

Another department is cloth-making, and in this the implements used are even more primitive than those employed in carpet-making, being precisely the same as those used by the natives in their villages. The convicts sit on the ground before their looms, with their feet and legs in a hole, manipulating their spindles with great rapidity, for, unless they turn out a certain amount of work during the day they will lose marks, or if they exceed their allotted task they will gain extra marks according to the amount of the additional labour accomplished. Thus they turn out mats and blankets.

In a large garden all kinds of vegetables are grown; also condiments. Cabbages, pumpkins, potatoes, onions, yams, beans, peas, cucumbers, turnips, beets, radishes, mangel wurzels, squash (*koomra*), gourd (*pulooal* and *jheenga*), spinach (*sag*), arum (*kuchoo*), mint (*pudinah*), chillies, lettuce, endive, parsley, fennel (*souooah*), and many other useful articles are grown. The object of this is to obtain a fresh supply of vegetables for the prisoners all the year round. Fish are also bred in tanks, *roho*, *mirgal*, and the *cutla*, all varieties of the *cyprinidæ* carp

species, being thus reared. Jails situated near large rivers are best adapted for the Waltonian industry, the process adopted being as follows: A small tank, reservoir, or ditch full of water is set apart for the rearing of fry from eggs until they are big enough to be removed to larger tanks. About the beginning of July, when the rains have set in, fine nets are used to collect the eggs (known in Bengali as *deem*) from the stream. The egg-collecting extends over a period of about a month, when the eggs are introduced into the hatching tank, care being taken that frogs do not get into the tanks, for they destroy the eggs in large numbers. When the fry are born they are fed to hasten their growth, and so solicitously attended until they arrive at maturity. The rearing of fish in jails helps to dispose of waste food, the fish being fed morning and evening with rice, *dall*, oil-cake, *kura*, *khoi*, bran, and waste vegetables. The fish themselves are, of course, used in the jail.

Limes are grown in the gardens, the juice obtained therefrom lasting all the year round. This article is a decided acquisition in a district where the temperature is sometimes 125° in the shade! The gardening is done by the convicts,

but as the gardens are situated outside the jail wall, offering a considerable measure of freedom, only those prisoners whose time is nearing expiration are allowed to engage in the work, in a like manner to the hands employed upon the farms of Dartmoor, extra precautions being taken by compelling the gardeners to wear leg-chains and placing them under a strong guard.

The prisoners' clothing is all marked with a specially prepared marking-ink. The process of making this is very interesting, and I will venture to describe it. The ink is made from what is called *Dhoby's nut* (*Semecarpus anacardium*) in the following manner: The nuts are soaked in cold water for a day, and then put into a wide-mouth earthen pot about 8 inches deep and 6 inches wide, with four or five holes in the bottom. Straw is inserted in these holes, as is done with drinking water filter chatties, and the pot covered with a flat earthen plate. Underneath this pot or chatty is placed another chatty, smaller, and about 4 inches deep, which receives the oil as it exudes from the upper vessel. A hole is then dug in the ground about 2 feet in diameter, and in the middle of this another hole, just large enough to receive the lower vessel. The chatties are then placed

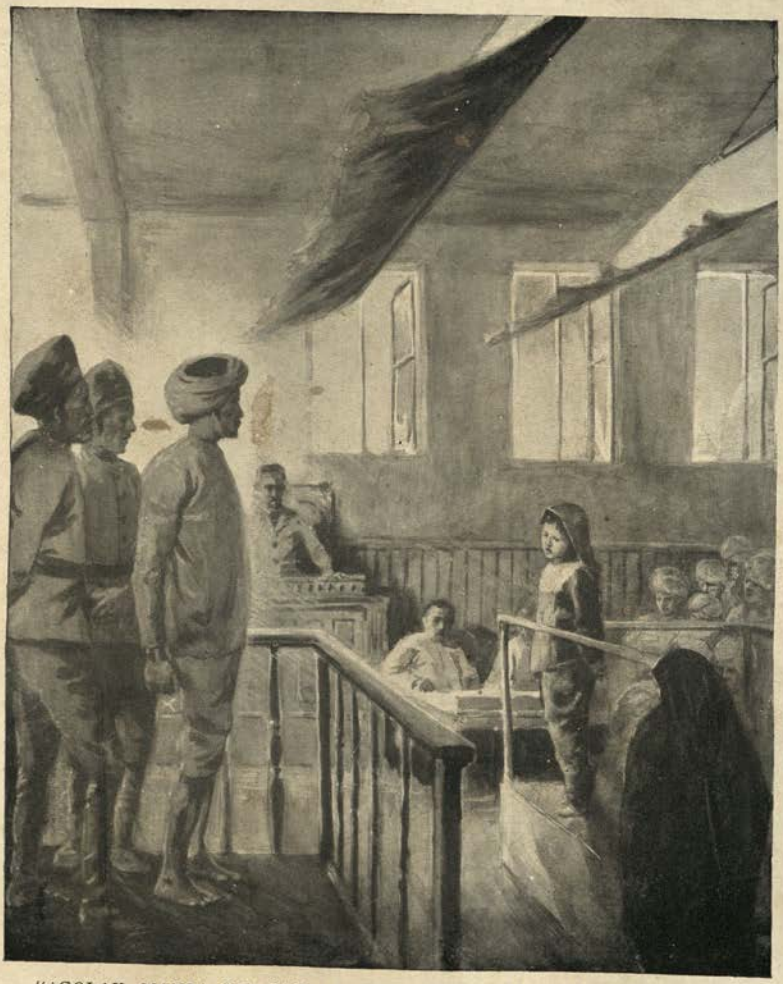
in the hole, the upper one being surrounded with dried cowdung, which is set light to, and which burns gently. When the ashes are cool, the chatties are removed, the lower one containing the oil, or ink, for marking the clothing. It is fit for use at once, and will keep for months. When the numbers fade after repeated washing they are inked in again. It was found at first that this ink formed a powerful irritant to the skin, which spread to other parts of the body besides those where contact took place. In order to remedy this fresh lime (*chuna*) water was applied to the marking, which acted as a counter-irritant, and also had the effect of fixing the dye.

Except in the case of solitary confinement, there are no cells in Indian jails. In the jail we have under notice the dormitories consist of long apartments with a passage down the middle, and on either side at intervals oblong earthen couches, built up some feet from the ground. Upon these the convicts, supplied with blankets and mattress of twisted rice-straw, sleep. When prisoners are paraded they are made to squat down on their haunches, put their open hands, palms upwards, over their knees, so as to prevent them taking anybody unawares.

They then place their caps on the left knee, hold their "history sheet" in one hand, and place anything else they may have with them, including their shoes, on the ground in front of them.

The Indian jail authorities take great care of their convicts, using every endeavour to keep them up to "par." There is a cogent reason for this, other than solicitude for the well-being of the prisoners, for the better condition the prisoners are in, the more work they will turn out. There are two meals a day, one at 7.30 A.M., and the other at 5 P.M. In the middle of the day there is a short rest, when each convict is given a little boiled or parched *gram*. The meals are simple, consisting of *chapatis*, made of Indian corn or wheat, and some *dall*; in the evening several ounces of vegetables. Condiments are also served out from time to time, consisting of chillies, coriander, salt, and garlic. In hospital, extra and better food is supplied, with rice, milk, and meat. In Indian jails you see the same social derelicts and outcasts who find life more acceptable in than out of prison as you meet with in English prisons. They will, immediately upon release, commit a crime in order

PRISONERS OIL PRESSING.



"'GOLAK MANI,' HE SAID, SADLY, 'WHO HAS TAUGHT YOU TO SPEAK SUCH LYING WORDS?'"

to be sent back to jail, and be overjoyed when they get there. It is one of those phases of life which one can never cease to deplore, nor for which to hold the social system in gravest responsibility.

Indian jails are frequently overrun with rats, and it is customary to offer a reward of so many marks for all rodents caught by the convicts, a reward which is eagerly sought for. If a prisoner is refractory he is placed in leg-irons. The apartment in which convicts receive visits is constructed on much the same lines in Indian jails as it is here, being divided off into wired sections, the warder standing between the convict and his visitor. The warders' quarters are situated at the entrance to the prison, as are also the offices and the armoury.

Indian convicts give a good deal of trouble to the authorities, particularly in the cunning and skill which they display in smuggling undesirable articles into the prison, such, for instance, as opium, tobacco, coins, dice, and drugs. These articles have been found to have assisted in the soleing and heeling of shoes brought into the jail, and have also been found concealed in religious books, so whenever such articles are supplied from the outside they are very carefully

examined before being given to the prisoner. But the convict gets the better of the authorities in the smuggling of coins, and in a very remarkable manner. He conceals them in a cavity in his throat which, with great patience and enterprise, he has formed therein by passing a coin fastened to the end of a piece of string down his throat, and keeping it there for some time. The string is fastened to the teeth, and by working the coin about a good deal a kind of crevice is formed, in which many coins can be safely secreted. The only means of detecting the presence of such a queer hiding-place, or of the coins, is by applying the Röntgen rays.

A prisoner on one occasion contrived to form a pipe in his earthen couch by boring holes, and enjoyed many a surreptitious smoke ere his novel "hubble-bubble" was discovered. They have some curious characters in Indian jails, peculiar to the East, their crimes always of a superlatively cunning character. One deformed convict had a very bad record of robberies under curious conditions. He would assume a most helpless condition of lameness, crawl into shops and beg for assistance. Directly the proprietor's back was turned he, with the swiftness of lightning, would pounce upon anything portable

within reach, and make off. The assumption of lameness never failed to disarm suspicion.

Capital punishment prevails in India, the method being the same as it is here, namely, hanging. But in India the prisoner has a right of appeal to the Governor-General in Council, or His Majesty the King-Emperor. These appeals are inscribed on the outside "Appeal for mercy," and "Urgent," and are sent by registered post. A prisoner condemned to death is given the same diet as an ordinary labouring convict, and, of course, he is constantly watched night and day. The superintendent of the jail is answerable for the carrying out of the execution, which always takes place early in the morning, either within or without the precincts of the jail. It is a public execution, and if it takes place within the jail grounds about thirty respectable male adult spectators are invited inside to witness the execution, their names and addresses being taken so that they may be called upon to testify to the carrying out of the sentence, should such a proceeding be rendered necessary. The executioners are long-term prisoners, who have been trained for this purpose, are kept at the district jails at Tezpur and Sylhet, and sent out whenever and to wherever

wanted. It is the duty of the superintendent of the prison where the execution is to take place to apply for their services. They are rewarded for the work with extra marks, seven hundred and twenty for the executioner, and three hundred and sixty each for assistants.

The execution takes place at the chief jail in the district in which the crime has been committed, and after condemnation the prisoner is conveyed straight to that jail. The superintendent must witness the execution, and when the prisoner is handed over to the executioner the warrant is read out to him, and repeated in the vernacular. After the execution has taken place the body is allowed to remain suspended, and is not cut down until the medical officer has examined and reported upon it. The warrant issued by the judge who condemned the prisoner is endorsed to the effect that the execution has duly taken place, and returned to the judge who issued it. The body is either burnt or handed over to friends.

For the rest the ghastly business is carried out in much the same way as it is in this country, which one is glad one need not go into.

CHAPTER XXV

SUBSTITUTION

THE natives of India sometimes hold their lives and liberty very cheaply, which occasionally leads to curious frauds. Who, in this country, would, for a mere monetary consideration, think of changing places with a prisoner sentenced to a long term of penal servitude, supposing such an exchange could be made? Yet such a thing is not by any means uncommon in India; and one of the most mysterious crimes ever committed in that country, the truth of which has never wholly been made manifest to this day, had for one of its main incidents the fraud of substitution. I propose to relate the particulars of it.

Some years ago there dwelt in an Arcadian hamlet called Kumaon, on the lower slopes of the Himalayas, one Ahmed Dutt, and his granddaughter, Durali ("darling"). The former was a thriftless old man, who had smoked himself into a condition of impecuniosity and imbecility;

the latter was a very handsome young woman of eighteen, the village beauty, about whose comely person a sinister repute hovered. Of course she was at the bottom of all the trouble we have to relate. Young men and old alike strove for her favours, and the rivalry which ensued in consequence led to the deaths of many suitors, the mystery or truth of which was never cleared up. Of course the tongue of gossip wagged industriously, and it was remarked with significance that Durali, despite the fact that her grandfather was in a condition bordering on pauperism, was enabled to dress elegantly and adorn her person with expensive baubles. Whence came the money for this meretricious display, asked rumour, but nobody dare give a definite reply.

Now Durali was beloved by two young men, named respectively Naim Sing and Johar, the son of Turroo. The former was the son of Bhowan Sing, a cultivator, and lived at the village of Beebadak, and was a handsome youth of athletic build. He was also possessed of considerable means, in the shape of pearls, gold mohurs, ponies, and milch buffaloes. Certainly a desirable match for a young woman in Durali's position. Johar was also a fine and handsome

youth, but had nothing to add to the natural attractions of his person as a set-off to Naim Sing's wealth. Yet was he the favoured suitor. It so fell out that Naim Sing, at harvest time, was compelled to leave on a mission to the foot of the hills, thus being absent from Durali's presence for about ten days. Ahmed Dutt, Durali's grandsire, had already smoked himself into another world, his body having been burnt in the customary manner. Thus Durali was left entirely alone with Johar.

Upon his return Naim Sing hastened at once to the hut of Durali, but found her not. He was tired from his long march, so cast himself down among the rice stalks, at the foot of a choora tree, to await the return of Durali. It was very hot, and he dozed off. At length, in his semi-conscious condition, he heard vaguely voices and footsteps approaching, also the shrill notes of a whistle. He knew at once it was Durali and Johar. The latter was beguiling the hour by discoursing on his famous instrument—a whistle fashioned out of a man's thigh-bone, and studded with rough torquoises. People never spoke of Johar alone, but always of Johar and his whistle. The melody proved on this occasion to be the dirge of his untimely fate.

They approached, Durali and Johar, and Naim Sing soon knew that Johar was making violent love to Durali, couched in Oriental extravagance of flattery, the while he was belittling and deriding his rival, Naim Sing, who was thought to be many miles away. As he listened Naim Sing's wrath arose in overwhelming force, and he gripped his keen-bladed *tulwar* (sword) as Johar came on to his doom. With one lithe bound Naim Sing, *tulwar* raised to smite, was upon his unsuspecting rival; the glistening blade descended and clove the head of Johar in twain. Durali shrieked, but the life of Johar was sped, and upon the head of the village beauty rested the infamy of yet another violent death.

At first Naim Sing waxed furious with Durali, but after a time his wrath was appeased, and Durali became his accomplice in the odious crime. But there was another witness. After the death of Ahmed Dutt, Durali enlisted the services of an old woman named Bucko to see to the home. This old woman had heard the cries of the slain man, so they were perforce compelled to admit her into the bloody secret. The body, which was concealed in a shed, must be buried, and for this task they waited till night descended. Then, by the light of the moon,

they carefully prepared a grave. They subtly removed the wheat stalks one by one from the surface of the ground to be excavated, dug the grave, and committed the body to the ground—Johar and his whistle. The grave was filled in, the surface carefully levelled, and the wheat stalks replaced. Thus was the secret sealed.

Naim Sing, having first purposely wounded himself on the leg with his *tulwar*, made the following statement to the authorities: He had, said he, been attacked by Johar, that the latter, alarmed at the injury he had inflicted, fled. Search was made, but the missing man could not be traced. His own family were sceptical, and suspected foul play, but Naim Sing's family was powerful, so the voice of suspicion was hushed, leaving everybody conjecturing what had become of Johar, the son of Turroo.

Now it so happened that Johar had a twin brother, a cripple, named Rateeban, and he took a solemn oath, in the temple at Gutkoo, that he would avenge, what he firmly believed to be, his brother's murder. His suspicions fell upon Durali, and, in order to get at the truth, he adopted a course essentially Oriental. He dissembled, haunted the hut of Durali, fawned upon her, flattered her, became apparently her

abject slave. Fate played into his hands in a strange and startling manner. Durali, after the death of Johar, had given herself body and soul to Naim Sing, believing him true to her. One fateful day she learned that her lover had, in another part, a not what she was to him, a mere convenient chattle, but a wife! Then, in the anguish of her mind, she turned to Rateeban, turned to him in the lust of revenge, and sought his aid to a deadly purpose. Now Rateeban had already remarked that it was strange a certain patch of wheat should remain uncut. Why was this? Durali gave him his answer. She conducted him to the spot and told him that below reposed the body of his brother, slain by Naim Sing.

The truth was out, and soon, to the alarm and indignation of himself and his kinsmen, Naim Sing found himself in the hands of the police, and in the jail at Almora. The trial caused an immense sensation, and ended by Naim Sing being sentenced to transportation for life. Rateeban was avenged! He gloated over his enemy, followed the procession of convicts 90 miles by road on the way to the distant prison of Moulmein, at every stopping-place jeering the manacled man. A closely veiled woman, riding

a pony, also followed the procession. It was Durali — repentant. But it was too late, the deed was done, and the man undone. So—thus strange is human nature—she cursed the wife as the cause of it all! But it availed nothing. About a year afterwards it was reported that Naim Sing had died in Moulmein jail, the death certificate giving the cause of death as "atrophia." His friends, however, said he had died of a broken heart. Durali disappeared. Here the curtain descends, to rise again many years hence.

Twenty years after, two wayfarers entered the village where Rateeban lived and announced that at a fair at Hardwar they had seen and spoken to Naim Sing. At first Rateeban would not believe, but afterwards determined to investigate it. The report revived his hatred in full blood, and he at once set out to tramp 90 miles to make enquiries. Sure enough, at a distant village in Gurwalh, he found Naim Sing and his wife. He denounced him as an escaped convict, and he was arrested, taken back to Almora, and tried under Section 226 of the Indian Penal Code.

The second trial of Naim Sing caused a tremendous sensation, thousands of people flocking to the court and its precincts. The people

took sides, one party declaring that the prisoner was undoubtedly Naim Sing, the other protesting he was not. The contention gave rise to feuds which have never been ended to this day. The prisoner himself stoutly maintained that he was not the Naim Sing they took him for, that there was another Naim Sing, said he, "who is mine enemy." He further stated that his name was Krookia, the son of Rusool Sing, who lived in a village called Tolee; that his horoscope might be had of Gunga Josh, if he still survived. He visited his wrath upon the head of Rateeban, whom he referred to as the "lame dog," and hoped that his race might be exterminated. In spite of the hard swearing on both sides, the authorities were still in a condition of considerable doubt and indecision, when a young Baboo from Allahabad cast, by his intelligent testimony, an unexpected and startling ray of light on the perplexing case.

His story was as follows: Twenty years ago, said he, he lived at Bareilly. The family consisted of his father, mother, and four children. His father was sick unto death. One night, while he, the witness, lay awake, he overheard a conversation between his father and an official

of the local jail, who had just come from the jail, and was a kinsman of theirs. The official made his father a proposition, telling him that his days were numbered, and asking him whether he would like to die a rich man. The sick man answered eagerly in the affirmative. Then the official informed his father that a gang of convicts would on the morrow pass through the place on their way to Moulmein, and asked him if he would take the place of one of them. He was, explained the official, about the same size and height, and in return for the service he would receive four hundred rupees, ten pairs of pearls, a pair of gold bangles, and three ponies.

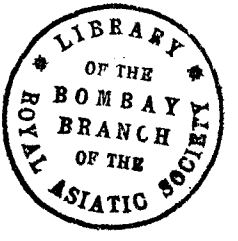
His father, said the witness, left the house with the jail official, and never returned. The next day three ponies were in their yard, bangles and pearls were upon his mother's arms, albeit she was weeping, and there was money in a cloth. When the convicts arrived, his mother took him to see them, and upon ponies they followed the procession for two days. His mother said she had a brother among the prisoners, who had been falsely convicted. This man wore a large cap pulled over his eyes, and he coughed painfully as he walked. When they parted from the convicts

he, the witness, took affectionate leave of this man. He knew it was his father. Afterwards he went south, and never returned to Bareilly.

That was the young man's story, which was credited by the authorities. The old man, whose name was Gunesheb, had bartered the little life remaining to him for the benefit of his family, and Naim Sing had gone free. Gathering boldness from impunity he had become too venturesome, and been recognised. He was convicted, and for a second time Naim Sing was sentenced to transportation for the term of his natural life. He was sent to the Andamans, and there he died. After conviction he made a most impassioned appeal for mercy, advancing all kinds of arguments that he could not possibly be the man they accused him of being, begging them not to punish him for bearing the likeness of a dead murderer. But the authorities paid little heed to his eloquence, for the case to them seemed clear enough. The balance of probability is undoubtedly on the side of his sentence being just, for he bore unmistakable physical resemblances to Naim Sing, including the scar of the self-inflicted wound on the leg. They also found his wife, who was wearing her

jewellery, which was, according to the customs of the East, conclusive proof that her husband was *alive.*

There were, however, many people, as I have already stated, who did not believe he was the real Simon Pure, and that an innocent man suffered for the guilt of a dead man. The case, though, is not likely to ever be lifted out of the sphere of partial conjecture.



CHAPTER XXVI

ESCAPES

THINGS are not made so comfortable in Indian jails but that prisoners occasionally desire and make bold efforts to obtain freedom. Such enterprises are attended with a larger measure of success in India than in this country, although the State adopts every possible device to frustrate them. All escapes are reported at once to the nearest police-station, to the magistrate of the district, or the superintendent of police. A "descriptive roll" of the escaped prisoner, containing full particulars of his identity, and his place of residence, is furnished. A similar description is also supplied to the magistrates of all districts the prisoner is likely to pass through on his way to his own district, and to the railway authorities if he is likely to avail himself of the railway.

If a prisoner succeeds in getting beyond the jail precincts, although captured immediately

after, he will be considered to have escaped. If, however, he is taken before quitting the precincts of the jail he is charged only with an attempt to escape. When a prisoner has escaped the superintendent of the jail makes enquiry among the officers as to whether the warder, or convict overseer who is directly responsible for the escape is in any way related to the prisoner, or whether he comes from the same village or *mouza*, whether such warder has been responsible for escapes before, with a view to his being placed on trial for criminal negligence. The guard are supposed never to take their eyes off prisoners while they are at work, which prevents any possibility of single escapes. When an escaped prisoner is recaptured an intimation to that effect is sent round to all the officials, the prisoner being received back into the same jail on his original warrant, the period he has been at liberty, not, of course, being considered as part of his sentence.

Rewards are offered for the recapture of escaped convicts by the magistrates of various districts, the amount of the reward varying according to the length of the original sentence of the escaped prisoner, thus—six months, ten

rupees; one year, fifteen rupees; three years, twenty-five rupees; more than three years, fifty rupees. If an escape is made while the prisoner is still under trial the reward for reapprehension is regulated according to the nature of the offence for which the prisoner is being tried. In exceptional cases larger rewards are offered up to three hundred rupees. Prisoners who have escaped, or attempted to escape, are placed in fetters, degraded in class, and are distinguished by wearing a red cap. They also lose the benefit of the mark system. When a prisoner has escaped and has not been recaptured his name, register number, and date of escape are inscribed inside the cover of the "release diary."

Escaped prisoners in India are not punished as such offenders are in this country, namely, for an infraction of prison rules, but are prosecuted judicially, and sent up for trial just as in the case of the committal of an ordinary crime. All prisoners are held responsible for the prevention of escapes, and if a prisoner appears to have been instrumental in aiding an escape, or to have been privy to it in any way, he will be punished. Prisoners who prevent escapes, or give timely information of intended escapes, are rewarded with extra marks, or in some other

suitable manner. All keys are taken great care of, and all fetters are carefully examined every day. The walls are so built as to make it difficult for a prisoner to scale them, there being no cornices or projections, and the tops rounded or sloping to an edge. It is particularly enjoined that no glass be fixed on walls, as this affords a hold for a blanket or cloth that might be thrown on it. An escape is indicated by the beat of a drum at the entrance, or the sounding of a bell or gong of a different tone from the ordinary jail bells. When this signal is given all the warders march their prisoners to a place of security, and there confine them. The gate sentry, with his loaded rifle or carbine, must defend the main entrance, and he is authorised and expected to fire upon any prisoner who attempts to force the main gateway, having first given him a warning. Other officials come to the aid of the sentry, and a guard mounts the roof of the main gate buildings to observe the movements of the prisoners inside, and warns them that if they do not disperse they will be fired on. If it is necessary to save the life of a jail official who is being attacked, the guard may fire on the prisoners with buck-shot without waiting for instructions. Convicts of

a morose, sulky, or violent temperament are not allowed to have in their possession a knife or any other instrument which they might use as weapons of offence.

Some very curious and daring escapes have, from time to time, been made from the various jails in India. One morning, some years ago, a commissioner received by post from a central jail an order of release, upon the authority of which a prisoner had been set at liberty. The remarkable part of it was that nothing was known to the commissioner of this release, and it was quite clear to him that the order was a skilful forgery. The signatures of a magistrate and a clerk had been faithfully imitated, and the seal of the court forged. The prisoner who thus secured his freedom was a half-caste named Charles Williams, who, however, did not enjoy his freedom very long, for he was re-arrested two days afterwards. No information could be got out of him, and he expressed astonishment when told that the order for his release was a forgery.

Suspicion eventually fell upon a fellow-prisoner named Maitra, who was undergoing a long term of imprisonment for forgery. But how did he obtain the materials to commit the forgery, and why should he wish to secure

Williams' release? These were rather perplexing problems. It was soon ascertained, however, that Maitra had been employed as head pressman in the jail press, and was engaged in printing release order-forms. He also had access to pens, ink, and paper. The investigation into why Maitra should connive at the release of Williams revealed quite a romantic story. Of course there was a woman at the bottom of it. It appeared that Maitra was a friend of the jail ticket clerk, and upon the latter's house being searched a number of love-letters from Maitra to his sweetheart were found. Maitra had just finished his substantive term of imprisonment, and had six more months to serve in default of paying a fine. He was anxious to pay this fine, and get out at once to his lady-love. Williams was a nephew of Maitra's mistress, and he told Maitra that there was a rich Begum in love with him, and that if he, Williams, could get out, he would persuade the Begum to pay Maitra's fine. Hence the forged order of release.

When Williams had obtained his freedom he sent word to Maitra that the Begum was dead. When re-arrested Williams turned Queen's evidence, and made a clean breast of it, and Maitra, realising that he was in for

another long period of imprisonment, made the following remarkable confession:

In June 1868, said he, he was in the 3rd Punjab Muleteer Corps, which, after its return from Abyssinia, was stationed at Bombay. Here he made the acquaintance of a young European woman disguised as a Mohammedan, who told him she had been carried off from Delhi during the mutiny by a native merchant, who finally abandoned her at Bombay. She said her name was Wilhelmina Rose. In September of that year, said Maitra, his regiment was ordered to Mooltan, and the European lady accompanied him thither, where the corps was disbanded. He said they had travelled by steamer to Kurrachee, and thence by Flotilla to Mooltan. He then journeyed to Lahore, where he obtained employment in the D.P.W. Controller's Office in March 1869. He and the lady stayed at Lahore until July 1869, when, having resigned his appointment, he returned with the lady to Bombay, putting up at the Byculla Hotel. They occupied two upper rooms.

After a while he suspected Wilhelmina of being untrue to him, and, secretly watching her, saw her receive a clandestine visitor. He thereupon determined to get rid of her. He accomplished

her destruction by one evening, about 9 P.M., poisoning her. Into a tumbler containing brandy and water he introduced one drachm of *aqua lauro-cerasi*, and ten to fifteen grains of strychnine, and this Wilhelmina drank, retired to bed, and never got up again. It was a fatal "night-cap." Maitra then made himself dead drunk, and fell asleep on the sofa in the sitting-room. In the morning he found the woman dead. He went to the market-place and there purchased a large wooden chest, made of mango wood, for which he paid five rupees. This was brought to the hotel in a gharry, and taken up to his sitting-room. Maitra placed the woman's body in the chest and fastened down the lid, and had the chest taken back to the gharry. He drove to Boree Bunder, hired a boat, had the chest placed in it, and bribed four boatmen with twenty-five rupees each to row him out of the harbour, and threw the chest into the sea. Returning to the hotel he took possession of Wilhelmina's effects, took them to the market, and there sold them. He then went to Calcutta by a boat of the British India Steam Navigation Company.

This was Maitra's story, which, it was concluded by the authorities, was an invention,

for, in spite of the fact that the authorities at Bombay and Maitra's old commanding officer having been communicated with, not the least confirmation of his story was to be obtained. His career had been a very bad one; he was known to be an incurable thief, and, in relating the above mendacious narrative, he also proved himself an incorrigible liar. His object in making this confession was clearly so that he might be sent to Bombay for trial, and that through that means some chance of escape might present itself. But the authorities paid no heed to "Wilhelmina's" memory, and Maitra was dealt with accordingly.

Three convicts once escaped from a central jail by making a ladder of bamboos and rope. By the aid of this they clambered over two walls and got clear away. The men had come from a frontier district, so had no friends near to assist them. The prison, also, was situated in the middle of some desert land, which rendered tracking comparatively easy. Police trackers were employed, and ran their quarry to earth about 50 miles away. The chase had one curious feature. One of the tracking parties, headed by a deputy-inspector of police, put up at a well one night, where the inspector,

doffing his clothing, lay down and went to sleep. It so chanced that the three escaped prisoners visited the well to obtain a drink of water, noticed the slumbering inspector, and quietly walked off with his clothing! When the men were captured, one of them was found to be wearing a turban made out of the inspector's pyjamas, and the others were disguised in other garments belonging to the same official.

A grim tragedy, which doubtless had for its object some scheme of escape, was once enacted in an Indian jail. One morning a magistrate of a district was, as is the custom, paying a visit to a jail, he having driven over with his wife. He went unarmed, and the single attendant with him was also unarmed. Suddenly the magistrate was surrounded by a gang of convicts, who, with the heavy brass pots they carried for the purpose of drawing water, beat out the brains of the unfortunate official. The most pathetic part of it was that the magistrate's wife was sitting in the carriage outside waiting for the husband who would never return to her — waiting, in fact, while he was being beaten to death.

Sometimes false alarms of escape are given for the purpose of keeping the warders in practice. At the signal all the prisoners are mustered, and

in about ten minutes it is known whether all the prisoners are safe, or, if any are missing, who they are. On one such occasion it was found that the prisoners were one short, and for some time they failed to trace the missing man's identity. At last an explanation was forthcoming. A prisoner had been hanged, and his name had not been struck off the register. He had escaped with a vengeance!

PART IV

TRANSPORTATION

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS

ALL life and long-sentence prisoners in India are transported to the penal settlement at Port Blair, Andaman Islands. As the native of India is a particularly home-loving individual, this banishment from his native soil is a great hardship to him. It is, therefore, not surprising to learn that many and desperate are the attempts to escape back to the mainland. It is, however, only this homesickness which causes the penal settlement of Port Blair to be to the prisoners such a crushing place of bondage, for in other respects the life they live there is one not by any means, under the circumstances, arduous or unhealthy. Although hot, the climate is, speaking generally, healthy, and the scenery very beautiful. The prisoners also enjoy a much

larger measure of freedom than do the inmates of the prisons on the mainland.

The territory which is thus utilised by the Government of India is known as the Andamans and Nicobars, and consists of a long and narrow string of very numerous islands, running north and south down the middle of the Bay of Bengal. The extreme south of the Nicobar groups is within 100 miles of Sumatra, and the extreme north of the Andaman groups is somewhat further from the coast of Burma. The territory is thus about 600 miles long, and nowhere more than 20 miles wide. The great penal settlement of Port Blair, the headquarters of the Administration, is situated in the South Andaman Island, and somewhere about the centre of the whole territory. Port Blair was named after Blair, the Indian marine surveyor of the eighteenth century. The convicts are located round the shores of a large, landlocked and very beautiful harbour. The choice of the situation is due to the fact that Port Blair is 300 miles from the coast of Burma, 400 miles from any part of the Malay Archipelago, and 700 miles from the coast of India, and all this across a stormy and often dangerous sea. Hence escape is rendered very difficult and perilous.

Transportation

The population of Port Blair and neighbourhood consists of the convicts, their guards, their descendants (which will be explained more fully hereafter), officials, and a small trading community, and, of the rest of the Andamans, of a perfectly harmless, naked race of savages of the Negrito type. To a casual observer the presence of the convicts would not at once be apparent, for they would present the appearance of ordinary free natives. Mr Man, who spent over thirty years there in official capacities, related to me how on one occasion, while escorting some visitors over the settlement, he was asked: "But where are the convicts?" To which he replied: "There they are—all about the place." They had, in fact, been moving about among them, but the visitors took them for ordinary natives.

I remember, some years ago, while approaching Dartmoor Prison, I was somewhat startled on observing several convicts in the open public thoroughfare, some distance from the prison, and apparently unattended. They were engaged upon some repairs to a house. Upon approaching nearer, however, I discovered that they were being closely guarded by a warder, who had upon his shoulder a carbine, which was doubtless

loaded. But the measure of freedom, which at first it seemed to me the convicts were enjoying, struck me as being curious. They, of course, had little more chance of escaping than the apparently free convicts of the Andamans.

The population of the Nicobars consists of a peaceable, phlegmatic trading community of Malays, who, however, until quite recent times, were dangerous wreckers and pirates. There is nothing of that kind there now, the nuisance having been effectually abated by the settlement of troops and convicts in Nancowry Harbour for the nineteen years ending with 1888. The great harbours of Port Blair and Port Cornwallis were first used as sites for penal settlements between 1789 and 1796, and later on abandoned. In order, however, to check the persistent murder and ill-treatment of shipwrecked crews by the Andamanese, the Government of India made up its mind in 1856 to try the experiment again, the actual experiment thereof being hastened by the difficulty of dealing with the great number of mutineers, deserters, and rebels that the Government had on its hands as the result of the Mutiny of 1857.

On an adjacent island, called Viper Island, the worst of the convicts are kept. The name

of this island, and its convict associations, has given currency to some wholly misleading impressions of the life led by the prisoners there. True, they are all desperate criminals, but for the most part they live on much the same lines as the other convicts. The island has, for instance, been called "Hell," which is the kind of melodramatic extravagance which often creeps into the descriptions of criminal communities. In general appearance nothing could be farther from resembling any conception of the infernal regions than Viper Island, which might much more fittingly be named "Fairyland." However, it is a mere detail, although it is a pity such erroneous impressions should get into type. The least interesting island of the group, speaking scenically, is Barren Island, which is an extinct volcano. All the others, including Diamond Island, Ross Island, Landfall, the Cocos, Little Andaman, Car Nicobar, and many others are characteristically beautiful, being particularly rich in jungle scenery.

Now, although Port Blair is a spot of such surpassing beauty, it is also at the same time a place of great depression, which is induced by its terrible tranquillity. For a man who has led a busy life in a populous city the life at

Port Blair is dreadfully crushing, for he feels that he is pushed away in a remote corner of the earth, and for any concern he has for other people, except his jailers, or that other people have for him, he might very well be dead. Even to a chance and casual visitor this depressing effect is painfully obvious, being emphasised by the quiet, docile, almost perfunctory habitude of the convict population.

This apparent and pathetic eagerness to please the powers exhibited by the prisoners in the workshops, the barracks, in the villages and the hamlets, may not, however, be relied too implicitly upon, for your Eastern malefactor is often a dangerous compound of docility, amenability, subtlety, and cruel craft. One moment he may be salaaming in humblest submission to his jailer, and the next, given the opportunity, putting him to a speedy and bloody death. Swift of thought, ready in device, rapid in action, the Oriental criminal is one to be ever on the alert with.

Port Blair, the beautiful and seemingly peaceful, has a very sinister record, scarcely a corner of it that has not, at some time or another, witnessed a deed of horror on the part of one of these docile prisoners. In a flash a place of

beauty and simplicity has been turned into a shambles, and all that is worst in human nature given free and full vent.

The Indian transported convict arrives at Port Blair at a very critical time in his career, when the air of detachment and repression of the place is most calculated to affect him. He has come fresh from the excitement of a great crime, and his trial with its doubts and uncertainty, and been finally pushed, as it were, into the silence of a land whence so few return. The period of his imprisonment is so long that it might almost as well be permanent, for indeed the chances look dismally as though it would be. It will therefore be readily perceived that the responsibility resting upon the shoulders of those who receive him and keep him in custody is a very heavy one. It is necessary that his master should acquire an adequate conception of his condition and general temperament, and order his life accordingly.

The jail system of Port Blair is the result of the practical experience of various superintendents, and has by no means been easy of accomplishment. The Government of India have given careful attention to the recommendations of various officials, and so the

system has been built up, under far more difficult conditions than prevail with the penal system of this country. The "standing orders" are interpreted at Port Blair in a broad-minded and humanitarian manner, and not in the rigid, acquisitive, and multifarious way as obtains in our prisons in this country. Think, also, of the huge number of prisoners that have to be guarded at Port Blair, the average convict population being twelve thousand. Of these a small percentage only are women — say about eight hundred.

Many things have had to be taken into consideration in the treatment of the convicts at Port Blair, with a view at the same time of making the cost of their maintenance fall as lightly as possible on the tax-payer. The climate has had to be taken into account, for, although it is healthy enough in itself, it is quite different from the climate of the mainland. The effect this change must have upon the health of the prisoners has had to be reckoned with. Upon those who have been long in residence there the change has had a curious effect. They have become acclimatised, and, upon being released and returning to the mainland, have found the climate of the latter does not now agree with

them, and they therefore return to Port Blair. Many keen intellects have been brought to bear in the shaping of the penal system of Port Blair, among others mention may be made of Lord Mayo (whose untimely death at the hands of a convict I shall presently describe), Lord Napier of Magdala, Sir Henry Norman, Sir Donald Stewart, Sir Clive Bayley, Sir Charles Lyall, Sir Alfred Lethbridge, Mr Scarlett Campbell, Dr Mouat, General Henry Man (father of the Mr Man previously mentioned), General Montague Protheroe, and Colonel Cadell.

Most of those who have had charge of the administration of the penal system of Port Blair have been men who have taken a great interest in the treatment of criminals, who have studied closely the criminal as compared with the ordinary citizen, who have brought their talents and their intellect to bear upon a task the gravity of which they have never either discounted or lost sight of. The same cannot be said of those who administer the penal system of this country, which is much in need of workers who have something more than a mere salaried interest in their duties.

In reviewing the whole jail system of India one is struck with the many features and ways

in which it is superior and more enlightened than the prison system of this country. The reason for this is of course to be found in the selection of the administrators. The superintendents of Port Blair have studied the criminal, have taken a metaphysical and psychological interest in their charges, through the medium of which they have been able to deduce certain results which have been invaluable to them in the shaping of their system. As one of these administrators, Lieut.-Colonel Sir Richard Temple, very rightly says, that the convict is mainly to be distinguished from the law-abiding citizen in his woeful lack of self-control, which comes out clearly in the convict, and is therefore to be looked for and guarded against.

The great error into which so many otherwise well-meaning prison administrators fall is the one of regarding the criminal as distinct and different from any other human entity. He is, of course, nothing of the kind. He is merely an ordinary weak mortal who has fallen by the way, and by virtue of some emphasised evil trait, plus opportunity and temptation. There are doubtless naturally and incurably vicious-minded people in the world, but they are very

few in number. A criminal is an ordinary human being in error.

It has been proved to demonstration that of the many thousands of convicts at Port Blair but a very small percentage are really dangerous, the vast majority being capable of considerable respectability, others being occasionally merely perverse. The end aimed at in shaping the penal system of Port Blair has been one of reformation, not repression. Port Blair is, in fact, speaking roughly, a huge practical reformatory. Every inducement is held out to the convicts of Port Blair to deserve well of their custodians, without in any way prompting them to take an undue advantage of any leniency shown them. Crime is a serious matter, and criminals are difficult to deal with, so too much velvet cannot be worn in the handling of them, but there is not the slightest necessity to adopt the mailed fist with them. Firmness is a serviceable enough weapon to use.

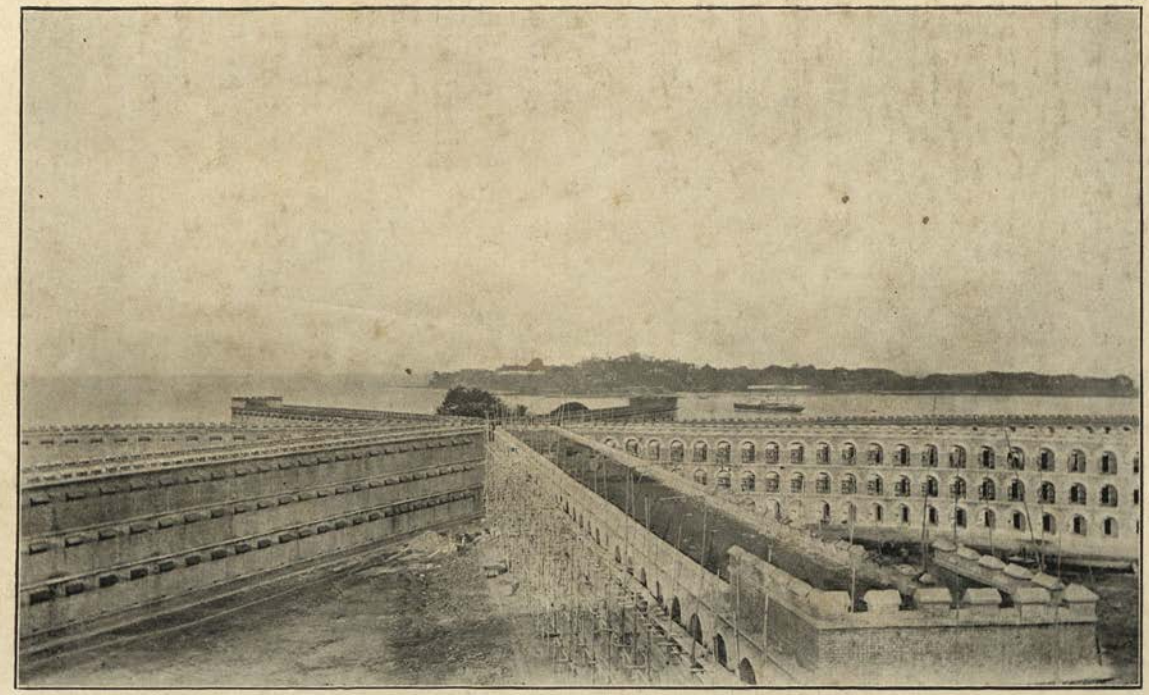
In the next chapter we shall see more in detail how the "lifer" of Port Blair is educated to be a credit to himself and those who have charge of him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LIFE AT PORT BLAIR

WHEN a convict arrives at Port Blair he is first conveyed to a cellular jail, wherein he serves the first period of his sentence. He does no hard work, but from morning till night he lives a life of sternest discipline — hard, rigid, and uncompromising. This is in order to break him to harness, and shake out of him all rebellious desires. For a period of not less than six months this continues, during which the prisoner remains in his cell all day and all night, except for the spells of exercise which he spends in company with others in the yard outside. He is not idle, and while in his cell he performs some light, useful, and suitable work.

The exercise consists of walking round and round in a ring, just as it does in English prisons. It is not very exciting, although the Port Blair prisoner applies himself to it with ardour and impatience, doubtless finding it a



A CELLULAR JAIL IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION.

welcome relief from the irksomeness of cellular confinement. As to the wisdom of such enforced seclusion I think opinions will differ. Personally, I am no advocate of it; I am certain it is a serious obstacle to the reform of criminals in this country. It may be that it answers better with the Oriental criminal than it does with the criminal of the West.

Cellular confinement ceases with this initial period, and the prisoner, who is now supposed to be broken to discipline, is transferred to an association jail, where he does hard labour in a gang, but still under strict discipline, and sleeps separately in a cubicle. This lasts for a year and a half, thus making two years of his sentence. For the next three years he is a slave, sleeps in barracks, locked up with other slaves, and works hard all day under supervision — an unpaid, unrewarded labourer, well fed, well housed and cared for, but constantly under watch and guard.

The accompanying photograph affords a very good view of a cellular jail in course of construction. It will be seen that the jail is being built on the "star" principle, each wing being independent of the others. In the case of an outbreak in any one wing the latter is isolated

by being shut off at the base, and thus preventing the outbreak spreading to the other wings.

The convict having thus spent five years of his sentence his life is eased down a little. His tasks are rendered less irksome, his employment is more varied, his personal capacities are partially studied, the more capable being eligible for petty posts of supervision. He also now gets a small allowance, with which he may purchase little luxuries for himself, or deposit it in the Savings Bank—an educational institution to be hereafter described. Ten years of the sentence having thus passed, if the prisoner displays a capacity for supporting himself, he is given what is known as a "local" ticket-of-leave, which entitles him to so much freedom as is to be obtained within the confines of the settlement. He is, however, still a convict, and under no circumstances may he leave the settlement. He is called a "self-supporter." In a sense he is a free man, for he lives in his own chosen way in a village in his own house, farms a little land, keeps cattle, and may move about unwatched. He may also send for his wife and children, or he may marry a convict woman who has become eligible for marriage.

This marriage of convicts is a subject on

which we must dwell at some length. It is a feature peculiar to Port Blair, and as to the wisdom of the proceeding there must, of course, be contending opinions. The only other penal settlement where such an institution prevails is the French settlement of New Caledonia. The convict marriages at Port Blair are arranged in the following manner: Suppose a "self-supporter" wishes to marry a female convict, he first applies to the jail authorities to be allowed to inspect the women eligible for marriage. From these he makes a selection, and intimates which woman his choice has fallen upon. The woman is then asked if she is willing to marry the man, but it does not always necessarily follow that she consents. She has, of course, the option of refusing. There may be various reasons for such refusal, sometimes amusing incidents will thus arise. Upon one occasion a very candid female, upon being selected for marital favours, exclaimed: "I'm not going to marry that cock-eyed old man!" The objection was allowed, and he of the twisted orb had to try again.

If the woman is willing to marry, however, the authorities at once proceed to make enquiries in India as to whether there exists any impedi-

ment to the union. The friends of both parties are consulted, and if they raise any reasonable objection, permission will not be given for the marriage to take place. It may be the woman has a husband alive in India; if so, his consent must first be obtained. This at first sounds peculiar, if not absolutely unreasonable and irregular, a systematic mixing up of marriages. But it should be borne in mind that so strong are caste prejudices among the natives of India that when a man or woman commits a crime the consequent disgrace to their friends is ample justification for the latter to desire the permanent detachment of the wrongdoers. Thus a wife or husband, suffering under the odium visited upon her or him by their respective partners, might reasonably be supposed to be glad to consent to such a ceremony as the above.

There may, of course, exist other cogent reasons against the projected union. The convict's own record may determine the authorities to withhold their consent; or the woman's disabilities may be a bar to the marriage. But if no such objections can be raised the necessary permission is accorded, and there the matter passes out of the hands of the jail authorities. The two people are left to

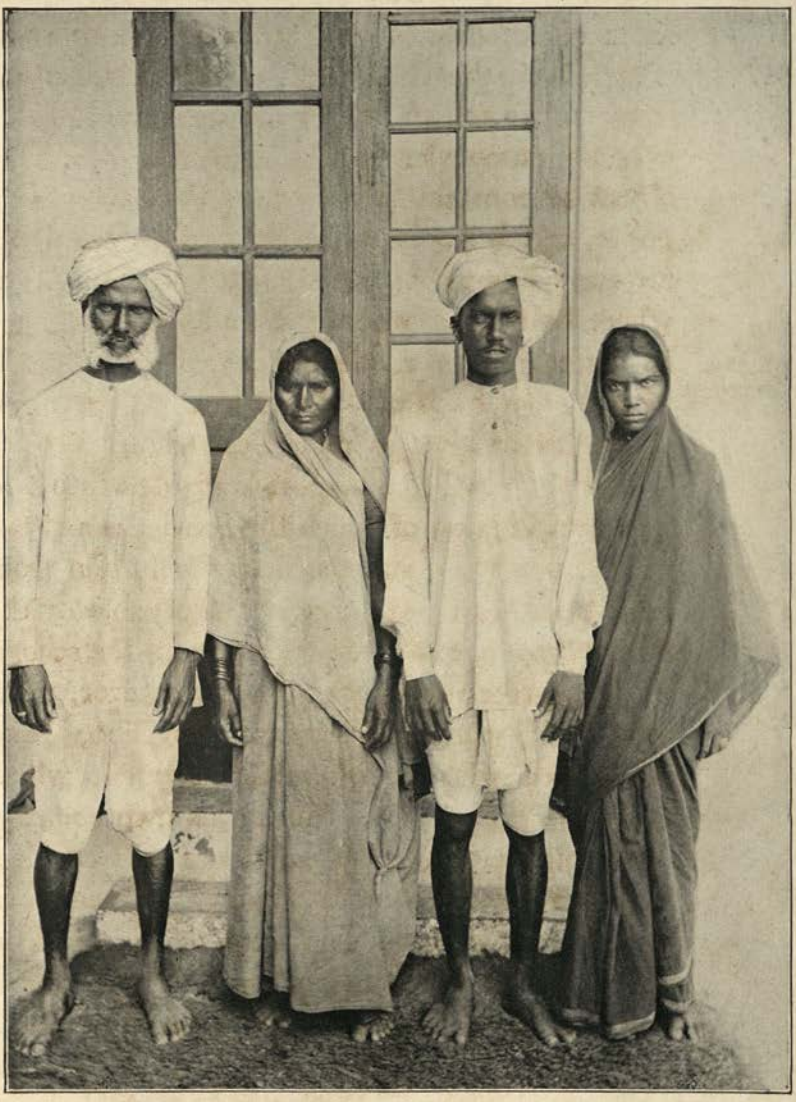
carry out the marriage ceremony according to their own native custom. It is generally made an occasion for a feast and a gathering, the latter, however, being limited by the authorities to twenty persons. The couple then live the lives of ordinary villagers, within the confines of the settlement, beyond which they may not go. In time children are born, and the partly emancipated criminal couple bring up a family in the convict village. But the man is really anything but "free," for he has no civil rights, under the ordinary law, and all the affairs of his life are dealt with by the executive authority. He must live where he is told, and generally conduct his life as directed for him, he may not move beyond his own village or fields without permission, he must not be idle under pain of returning to ordinary enforced labour, and, as I have already pointed out, he must not go beyond the confines of the settlement.

In this condition the man lives for ten or fifteen years, according to the nature of the crime which has brought him thither, when, his record being clean, he may return to the mainland an absolutely free man, taking with him his wife and, if any, his children. Or, an equally free man, he may stop at the settlement. Many

prefer this to returning to India. Sometimes a man will go back to India, and there find life so strange and in other respects undesirable, that he is glad to return to the settlement. Wherever an ex-convict settles in India, he is an object of constant suspicion on the part of the police, and is liable to be arrested on suspicion for every crime that is committed in the district where he resides, where the guilty man cannot be found. This renders life very burdensome to him, and he is glad to return to Port Blair, where his freedom is much less trammelled.

The period of self-support is divided into two stages, in the first of which the convict is assisted with house, food, and tools, by exemption from rent, taxes, fees and other cesses payable by the free towards the common benefit. In the second stage he receives no assistance whatever, must provide the whole of his means of livelihood, and is charged with every public payment which would be exacted from him in his own country.

I confess that this marriage of convicts exercises my mind considerably. It seems to me to be the very incubation of criminality. Not only do the convicts co-habit and breed, but their progeny are reared in an atmosphere of crime, in a convict village, in a condition of



TWO CONVICT MARRIED COUPLES.

jail discipline. It is, therefore, not surprising to learn that the offspring of these convict unions frequently grow up most rebellious children, causing the authorities not a little anxiety and vexation. Certainly, under the circumstances, one could not expect less evil to accrue, and would not be surprised if much more serious consequences happened. I am fully alive to the great evil of enforced and prolonged celibacy, which is inevitable with ordinary imprisonment; but the marriage of convicts seems to me to be an evil of equal, if not even greater gravity on the other side.

Of the two evils I certainly do not consider that the marriage of convicts is the lesser. True there does not appear to be any intermediate course to adopt, inasmuch as the evils attendant on criminality, from a social point of view, will survive so long as crime exists. It is, in fact, an impossibility to cure existing crime, the only remedy for the evil lying in preventive measures. Although you cannot cure existing crime you may, by wise and solicitous administration, eradicate it. Neither giving in marriage nor abstention from marriage among convicted criminals can be regarded, on the one hand, as other than an inevitable

evil, or, on the other hand, as a remedial measure. The solution of the problem lies much deeper, to which the marriage of convicts would seem to offer some impediment. By all means do the best that wisdom can dictate for all existing criminals, but can this marriage of convicts be justified by expediency? I venture to think not. Does it afford any sort of remedy, or is it in any way palliative? I think the same answer applies. Doubtless it is adopted with the best intentions, but, "the best laid plans of men and mice gang aft agley."

Female convicts at Port Blair are treated on much the same lines as the males, although with somewhat less severity, as becomes their sex For the first three years women work in the female jail as mere slaves, fed, housed, clothed, and cared for. For the next two years they are treated to the same sort of easing of severity as is granted to the men. Having served five years they become eligible for marriage and domestic service. If a woman marries she is subject to the same kind of disabilities as her husband, and, as already intimated, she may leave with him when he becomes absolutely free, and provided she has completed her twenty years' imprisonment.

During the whole course of treatment, of education to useful citizenship, as it were, the prisoners are taught to practise self-help and self-restraint. There is no definite period of confinement in the cellular jail, the period of a prisoner's detention therein being determined by his individual behaviour. He is made to understand that submission to control and good behaviour generally mean promotion from grade to grade to the stage of self-support. On the contrary, every act of insubordination will operate in a retrogressive manner, and he will be so much longer arriving at the most desirable, or least undesirable, period of imprisonment.

When at length he has obtained his ticket-of-leave it depends entirely on his own thrift, steadiness, and application as to how much money will lie to his credit in the bank at that stage of his career when such a nest-egg will be most acceptable to him. Possessed of this hoard, he will be saved from a condition of pauperism, or from being a burden upon his relatives. The ultimate object aimed at is to make of the prisoner a thoroughly self-respecting citizen, possessed of capital of his own earning, thoroughly broken to harness, and habituated to providing for himself in an orderly way.

He arrives at the jail a rebellious outcast, not fit to associate with his kind on equal terms, and goes forth therefrom a useful citizen, broken to restraint, and faithfully observing those conventions of the society in which he lives, and by which observance the society can alone exist.

The incorrigible are kept at Port Blair for so long as they shall live, no prisoner being released unless he, by his behaviour, proves himself to be thoroughly reformed.

CHAPTER XXIX

CONVICT WORK

THAT criminals are capable of living useful and peaceable lives is proved by the work they turn out in jail, and their conduct generally while under restraint. That they do not so conduct themselves while free men is due largely to their lack of self-restraint, so that in order to induce them to lead reputable lives it is necessary to impose upon them that restraint which they themselves are incapable of exercising. This rebellious spirit which prompts men to commit criminal acts is the outcome of a lack of restraint in early life, due largely to culpably careless mothers, and home influences generally. Sometimes, too, over-indulgent parents will allow children to grow up in a condition of rebelliousness, permitting them to do just as they choose, even to riding roughshod over their own parents.

The early training of a child is everything to its future career, and in this respect mothers

are gravely responsible to posterity. That they frequently fail in their maternal duties to their offspring is only too painfully apparent. Careless and incapable mothers are answerable for the existence of a large percentage of criminals. A child's disposition depends far more largely upon maternal than paternal influence.

The advantage of the Port Blair system over the ordinary prison system is that it fits a man to support himself, while the latter turns him out a pauper pauperised. The whole time an ordinary prisoner is in incarceration he is a mere cypher, doing everything perfunctorily, and having everything found for him—such as it is. The consequence is, this uselessness grows upon him, and he is eventually released, eminently incapable of supporting himself by honest methods, nor desiring so to do. The Port Blair system ought to be adopted throughout the whole of our prisons in this country, with the exception of the marriage feature. It is a valuable education. The whole system tends to inculcate in the prisoners all those virtues which go to qualify him for the life of a reputable citizen, and which should have been instilled into him in early life if his parents had done their duty towards him. Everything that

happens to him at Port Blair is the result of a quasi-judicial proceeding, which impresses upon him the value of justice. No punishment is inflicted without a proper proceeding, registration, and a record of evidence taken. There is then a form of appeal, and a still further appeal to headquarters.

I have already mentioned the Savings Bank. This is a great factor in the education of the convict. For years past more than a fourth of the resident convicts have kept their savings there, consisting of their allowances and the earnings of their holdings, and by this means they have learned the two great lessons of thrift and faith in the honesty of the Government. There are, of course, hospitals at Port Blair, and convicts, either labouring or self-supporting, are cared for in sickness. The sanitation, which is very indifferent as a rule in the East, is here good, and there is almost an entire absence of serious diseases. Both the death- and sick-rate are very low.

It must not for a moment be supposed that life at Port Blair is all that might be desired under the circumstances, but it is certainly all that wise and skilful administrators can so far make it. A very depressing picture might be

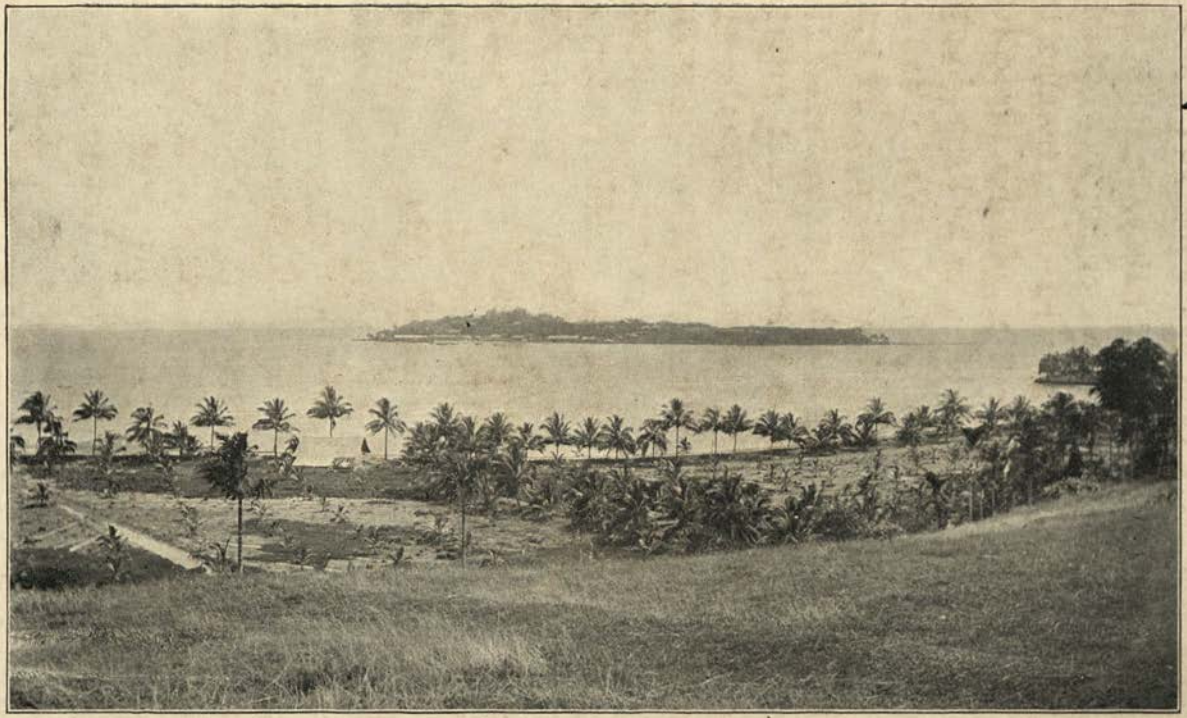
drawn, if one were disposed to be pessimistic, in which envy, hatred, and malice would figure prominently; one might depict many instances of uncharitableness, evil-speaking, lying and slandering, murder and cruel death, amazing immorality, callous depravity, and downright unabashed wickedness. Oriental convicts are no saints whose lives may be ordered with ease and facility, nor is a convict village an Elysian demesne. The object aimed at by the authorities is rather to seek out the good that is in the worst of human beings, and turn it to the best account, than dwell upon the bad side of their charges, and thereto present a forbidding presence.

The management of the penal settlement of Port Blair is no light task, as may be gathered from the fact that between 8,000 and 9,000 hands are on the daily labour books, and all these men have to have work allotted to them. They carry out a multiplicity of tasks. They clear forests, drain swamps, reclaim coral banks, converting them into grazing and arable lands. They are also engaged in cultivation, growing all the food and fodder, cereals, fruit, vegetables, tea, coffee, cocoa, tapioca, arrowroot, pepper, oil, and other useful articles. They raise acres of

artichokes, and catch what fish is required. They cook all the food, having manufactured the kitchen utensils. They breed and tend the cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry; they collect fuel from the forests and cut it up, and make salt from sea-water. They do all the porterage and carrying, whether in boats, barges, tramways or carts, which they also build. They build anything, from a steam-launch to a wheelbarrow, and make any kind of furniture. Their speciality in boats is a carvel-built craft. They provide the materials for this work, wood from the forest, and ironwork from pig-iron. All the buildings, stone, brick, wood, or iron, they build, the fine barracks, huge jails, the beautiful church, factories, mills, houses, tall chimneys, long sea-walls and piers, harbour breakwaters, roads and drains, earthworks and embankments, reservoirs and wells, have so been constructed. For every kind of labour they find their own materials. They procure lime and mortar from the coral banks, stone from the quarries, bricks and tiles from local clay. They cut the timber in the mills, manufacture and make up all the iron, brass, copper, and other metal work; do plumbing, glazing, and painting; make rope, yarn, string, and fishing-nets from hemp and cocoanuts

grown by themselves; make cane and wicker and basket-work from the canes and bamboos they fetch from the forest; they, together with the women, make all the clothing and bedding, cotton, woollen, cloth, and leather, tanning the skins of their own cattle, spinning the cotton from the rough hank, cleaning and spinning the wool as it comes from the sheep's back; their sheeting, towelling, and cotton carpeting being stout and unusually good.

The men drive and run a great mass of machinery, including steamers, engines, saw-mills, brick-mills, rice and flour mills, water-works, and huge steam workshops. If it were not for the assistance of the machinery it would be impossible to get through all the work. Superior work is also done, such, for instance, as port-signalling, tide-gauging, meteorological reporting and designing of many kinds; also hammered brass and iron work, fine wicker and basket work, and wood-carving. The specimens shown in the accompanying photographs were done by Burmese convicts. They do all the domestic and messenger service, washing, scavenging, and cleansing; do clerical, account, and statistical work, printing, lithographing, and stereotyping.



ROSS ISLAND.

The object of all this convict labour is to save the taxpayer's pocket as much as possible, to reduce as far as practicable the number of useless prisoners, at the same time not interfering with any trade, or competing with any honest labour. The convicts have not been brought to a condition of proficiency in these many occupations without a vast amount of trouble, for your convict is not the most apt of pupils. As far as possible, and in order to lighten the work of tutorage, convicts have been put to the trade they have been used to outside; but this has not been of much assistance, inasmuch as only three per cent. of the Port Blair prisoners have been found equipped for such employment, all the others having to be taught. Occasionally a trade may be dislocated by losing some of its workers through release, promotion to self-support, punishment for misbehaviour, or other causes. This sort of thing gives a good deal of trouble. On one occasion all the leading men of the printing, lithographing, and stereotyping department had to be removed, as, instead of stereotyping printed formes they were making *spurious rupees*! A similar thing once happened in a prison on the mainland, when some convicts employed in the blacksmith's shop were detected

making counterfeit silver coins. It is really quite remarkable how impossible some criminals, admirable artificers though they be, find it to resist employing their skill in an unworthy manner. In this way Port Blair sometimes are compelled to dispense with the services of skilful and valuable craftsmen, in order to adequately punish them. For instance, they were compelled to put a very clever carpenter to beating cocoa-nuts in jail because he could not be depended upon to go straight with his own trade for more than six months at a time; another convict, a skilful accountant, had to be put to ignoble labour because he could not resist the temptation to cook the accounts! A painter, most proficient in the best work, had to be put to punishment labour in consequence of his endeavours to sell the materials. And so on. Convicts can be very troublesome workmen.

All the administrative work is carried out by the various officials, executive and subordinate, with the superintendent at their head, to watch, direct, and order. The success of the Port Blair system, in spite of its many drawbacks, is eloquent testimony to the skill and adaptability of British officials who, when put upon their mettle, are equal to anything. They

thoroughly understand their charges, know that a convict must be dealt firmly with, and must not be forgiven for a fault, although never punished vindictively.

Several of the islands are utilised for the work of the settlement. On Chatham Island are situated the saw-mills and invalids' working-shed. Here invalids and infirm convicts are put to light and sedentary work. There is also a signal station on the island. They have a complete system of semagraphing at Port Blair, by means of which they can at any time and in any weather signal by means of flags, heliograph, or night-lamps, which are worked by the military police of the settlement, from island to island, and point to point. The forms are ordinary telegraph forms, and there is a charge per word, as in ordinary telegraphy, for private messages. The system is so complete that the superintendent can have in his hands an answer to a circular message from every semagraph station in the settlement within half an hour of its despatch. He can thus know in a very short time, in any necessary detail, what is going on generally at any hour of the day or night. Telephonic and wireless telegraphic communication have recently also been established.

Viper Island, already referred to, was named after a Royal Naval gunboat of the last century, and, upon it, as I have previously mentioned, the worst and most incorrigible of the convicts are kept. There is also a picturesque building within which were once kept European prisoners; but no such convicts have been confined there for thirty odd years. It was found not to suit them. The building is now used as a signal station and native police guard-house, and is really on a separate island called Buknipur, which subquently became joined to Viper by means of reclamation. The work of reclamation is, in fact, in constant progress at Port Blair, it being of sanitary as well as economic value, inasmuch as the work is carried out over coral banks and mango swamps. The only way of making these districts healthy is by covering them with wholesome soil from the neighbouring hills to a point well above tide-level.

The headquarters are situated on Ross Island, which shuts in the outer harbour from the sea. It was so chosen, as it is nearest the open sea of all the islands in the general harbour, and every boat must pass it to get out. On it is kept the spare food supply, the records, and the small amount of money necessary to finance the

place, out of the way of any rising or attack. In the event of the convicts rising they could easily be starved into submission in a very short time. On it are Government House, the British infantry barracks, the church, the settlement mess-house, the local volunteer headquarters, and other large buildings, all built by the convicts. The church has a fine stone spire, designed by the then superintendent, General Man, and subsequently constructed under Colonel Horsford, Chief Commissioner, and Lieut.-Colonel, Sir Richard Temple, as a memorial to the numerous Europeans who lost their lives in the great cyclone of 1891. There is also an ice-house, wherein ice is made daily by the ton.

CHAPTER XXX

OTHER FEATURES OF PORT BLAIR

THE whole of the Andaman Islands are of surprising beauty, and are so studded with roomy and safe harbours that they can be got at in any weather. Facing the inner harbour of Port Blair is Mount Harriet, so named after the wife of General Tytler, once superintendent at Port Blair. Among the many beautiful spots with which the islands teem is South Corbyn's Cove, named after Mr Corbyn, a former chaplain. On a small hill is Corbyn's Cove Village, which is inhabited by self-supporters and ex-convicts, the latter being those free men who prefer to live at the settlement to returning to India, and to whom I have already referred. This class of resident is much encouraged. From Aberdeen Harbour may be seen a cocoa-nut grove, planted in a reclamation from the sea. Cocoa-nuts not being indigenous to the Andamans every tree has to be planted and specially

cared for. The seed-nuts have been brought from the Nicobars, where, as long ago as the days of I-Tsing, the Chinese traveller of the seventh century, the tree was the staple source of livelihood, and indeed still is.

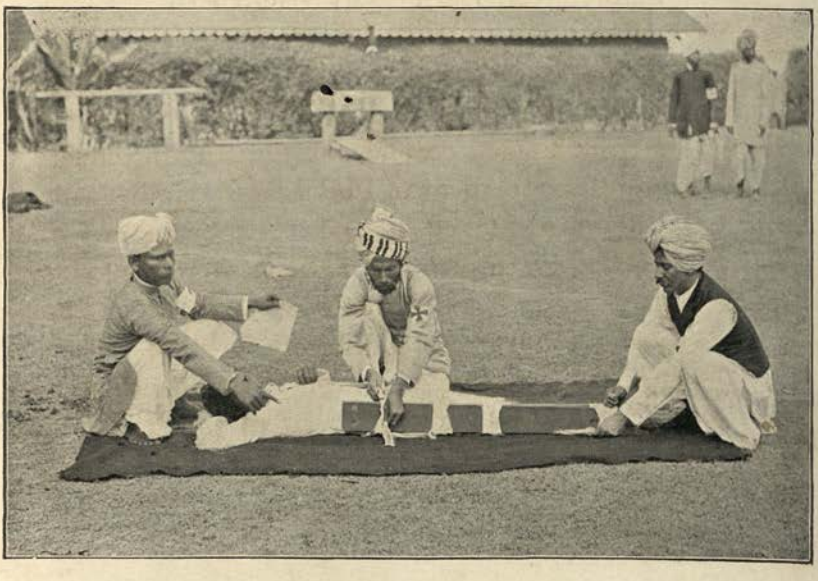
All over the settlement are roads, embankments, reclamations, tanks, and reservoirs, all brought into existence by convict labour. There are several places about the settlement named Aberdeen, that being the place that Blair, the great Indian marine surveyor, came from. Wherever the convicts are working in the open they feed in the open, and are not marched back to jail for that purpose as they are in this country. On Ross Island is Ross Bazaar, where only free people live—traders, native soldiers, and police. On North Sentinel Island, situated about 60 miles from Port Blair, and which is noted for some very fine *mahwa* jungle, are to be found the Jarawa tribe of the Andamanese, an entirely irreclaimable and hostile race, whom neither kindness nor force has any appreciable effect on in their repugnance to strangers of all kinds, even their own Andamanese neighbours. Many an escaped convict, landing upon this island, has been promptly and mercilessly butchered.

The construction of Government House affords a very good example of what can be done with convict labour, and I, therefore, make no apology for referring to it again. The building was altered some time ago from the original structure, being replanned and reconstructed by Sir Richard Temple. It is a many-gabled design of old English type, adapted to tropical needs. It was constructed by a locally-trained foreman builder, a carpenter by trade, and an ex-captain of banditti by occupation, with the assistance of a few simple plans and personal explanations. The interior is very handsome, and is adorned with the carvings of Burmese convicts already referred to.

The same system of convict warders prevails at Port Blair as exists in the jails on the mainland. This was initiated by the late General Man at Singapore, and subsequently introduced into the settlement of Port Blair.

Both male and female convicts are trained in the science of "first aid," under the auspices of the St John Ambulance Association, and under the superintendence of medical officers. Classes are formed, at which ambulance work generally is taught, and severe practical tests applied. The classes are held in the hospitals

"FIRST AID" AT PORT BLAIR.



"FIRST AID" AT PORT BLAIR—AN INJURED LEG.

for two hours every week, every man selected being taught elementary anatomy and physiology, in addition to first aid in fractures and cases of apparently drowned. Elementary sanitation is also taught, the main facts concerning tuberculosis and malaria, and the precautions to be taken against them, the importance generally of careful cleanly cooking of food, and boiling of water. Each class consists of sixteen men, of divers nationalities and languages, including Burmans, Bengalis, Pathans, Madrasis, Punjabis, Hindustanis, and Gujiratis. All speak widely different tongues, are instructed by men whose native language is Tamil, and who are taught in Hindustani. The work is very arduous for the teachers, for convicts are difficult to educate, the women being less apt than the men.

At the examinations the pupils are taken very carefully over all the points in the syllabus, the candidates being told to put on a triangular bandage, put up a fracture with improvised splints, mark out the position of the main arteries, and indicate the places and methods of arresting hæmorrhage. They are afterwards examined on drowning, food, malaria, etc. Rewards are given for proficiency, and in every instance where a convict renders "first aid" to

an injured comrade. Here is a medical officer's report of one such occurrence: "I have the honour to bring to your notice the good work done by 2nd Peon, No. 11,922, Pancham of Phœnix Bay, in rendering first aid to an injured convict, No. 22,718, Sherdad, who, while working in the iron factory at the workshop, accidentally received an injury to his left hand, causing a badly contused and bleeding wound. The 2nd Peon referred to above, bandaged the hand neatly, and put the wounded hand in a sling, extemporised for the purpose, by turning up the Kurta which the wounded convict was wearing, and then brought the convict to hospital. I was much pleased to see the way in which the hand was bandaged tightly enough to stop the bleeding, and the bandaged hand put in a raised position in a sling improvised in a way he was taught in the ambulance class. I beg to add that this 2nd Peon lately passed the ambulance examination held at Haddo Hospital." The sequel to this is to be found in "Settlement Order, Convict No. 11,922, Pancham 2nd Peon," in the shape of an order of a year's remission of the sentence the convict would otherwise have had to serve.

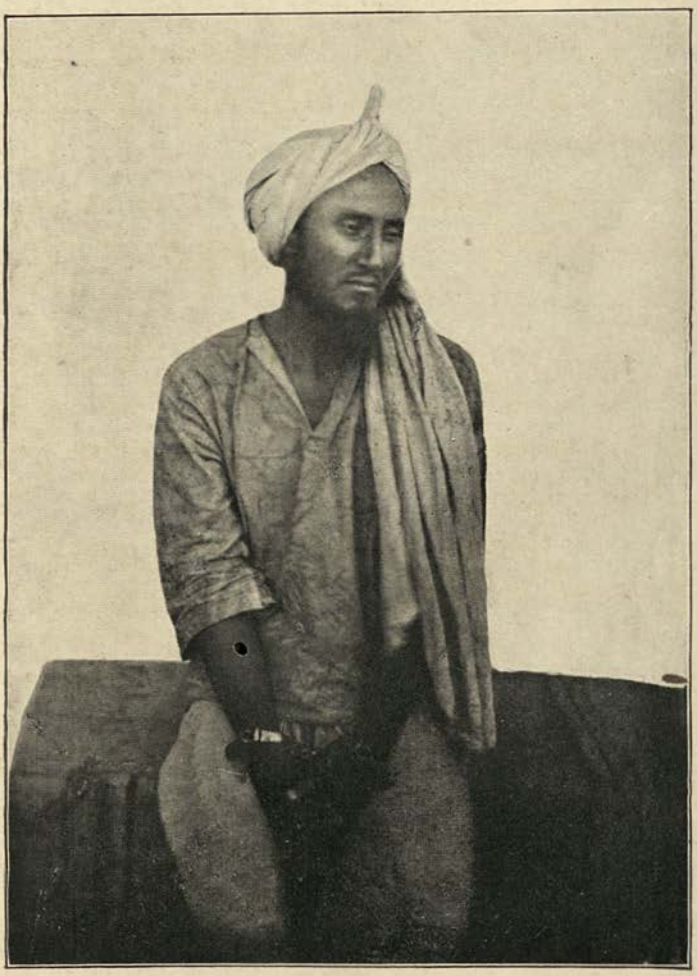
It is a pity that so beautiful a place as the

Andaman Islands should have its record stained with some particularly sanguinary happenings, among the most deplorable of these being the assassination of Lord Mayo, the then Viceroy. All those officials who are employed in guarding desperate criminals stand perforce in positions of no inconsiderable peril. This danger is if anything more pronounced in the East than it is here, the natives being so extremely cunning and reckless in sacrificing human life. It was in 1872, at Hopetown, that Lord Mayo was murdered by an Afridi convict named Sher Ali. The Viceroy was making a tour of the settlement, and had just returned from a visit to Mount Harriet, whither he had gone to judge of its suitability as a sanatorium. The hour of seven had just been rung by the ship's bells, and it was quite dark. By the jetty stairs a launch, with steam up, awaited his lordship, and upon the pier-head a group of seamen stood ready to board the vessel. At length the Viceroy's party approached, headed by two torch-bearers, and Lord Mayo advanced quickly towards the stairs which led to the launch. Suddenly a sound was heard, as though of "some rushing animal," from behind some loose stones; a hand was seen to rise in the air,

and a knife to gleam in the torchlight; then there was a thud, and Lord Mayo's private secretary, looking round, saw a native "fastened like a tiger" upon his lordship. In a moment all was confusion. A dozen men went pell-mell for the assassin, who would himself have been summarily slain by the convict officers, who had to be kept back by force.

The torches had gone out, and Lord Mayo pitched off the pier into the water, wherein he was seen to stagger to his feet and, knee-deep in water, brush the hair from his brow. His secretary rushed through the surf and helped him up the bank. "Burne," said the wounded man "they've hit me." Then in a louder voice: "I'm all right, I don't think I'm much hurt," or words to that effect. In a few moments he was sitting on a native cart beneath the flickering light of the torches, which had been relit, his legs dangling. They lifted him up and saw upon his light coat a large dark patch. The blood poured out, and it was in vain they attempted to stanch it with their handkerchiefs. For a moment or two he sat up, then fell backwards. Faintly he muttered: "Lift up my head"—and sank into the arms of death.

At first it was thought that this infamous



THE ASSASSIN OF LORD MAYO.

crime was the outcome of some political plot or intrigue, but subsequent investigation proved that this was not the case. It appeared that this Sher Ali, who was secured, had been a distinguished soldier, and done excellent service to several commissioners at Peshawar. He was implicitly trusted by Colonel Reynell Taylor, one of the best of our Indian officers; when at Peshawar he used to go about with his children, and was the confidential servant of the house. The man was a member of a society in which family feuds prevail, something after the style of Corsican vendettas, when mutual life-taking becomes a hereditary custom. Sher Ali, in obedience to the mandate of a feud in his own family, committed the murder for which he was sent to the Andamans. If he had committed the deed on the other side of the frontier no notice would have been taken of it, but having committed it where he did it was necessary that the law should take cognisance of it. But in consideration of his previous excellent record the capital sentence was respited to penal servitude for life, and thereby arose the trouble which culminated in the violent death of Lord Mayo. Sher Ali, himself, preferred death to being sent to the Andamans, and considered himself unjustly

treated by being consigned to penal servitude, and took the first opportunity of being revenged.

In 1883 Frederik Adolphe de Röepstorff, a Dane and officer in charge of the settlement, was also assassinated under the following circumstances: The murderer, a *havildar* of the Madras Infantry detachment, then stationed at Nancowry, was charged with having assaulted a convict. The *havildar* was placed on trial, and the superintendent, having listened to and recorded a good deal of contradictory evidence, adjourned the case. Thereupon a *jemadar* of the Madras Infantry visited the superintendent and pleaded on behalf of the *havildar*. De Röepstorff, however, merely upbraided him for interfering, so the *jemadar* went and informed the *havildar* that he would probably receive a severe sentence, which might result in his being dismissed from the army. This so enraged the *havildar* that he determined to have revenge. He waited in his room at the barracks, and, a few hours later, as the officer rode past he shot him. The murderer was a crack shot, and had twice carried off the Commander-in-Chief's prize. Having perceived that he had inflicted a fatal wound—De Röepstorff died in a minute or so—the murderer turned the weapon on himself, and

committed suicide. The murdered man's wife despatched news of the affair to Port Blair by a *bagla*, which had just arrived in Nancowry Harbour. In five days Mr Man arrived and held an enquiry. During those five days Mrs De Röepstorff passed a very uneasy time, regarding with horror the Madras Infantry sepoys, none of whom would she allow to approach her house. In a tiny cemetery, upon a picturesque hill, commanding a stretch of beautiful harbour, reposes the body of De Röepstorff.

CHAPTER XXXI

ESCAPES

DOUBTLESS prompted by that love of home, which is so strongly implanted in the bosom of the native of India, the attempts to escape from the penal settlement of Port Blair are, comparatively speaking, frequent, subtly contrived, and desperately carried out. They are also, according to statistics, alarmingly successful. In the official report for the year 1905-1906 I find the following figures: There remained uncaptured ninety-four escaped prisoners, of whom thirteen had been at liberty over seven years; during the year thirty-five had escaped, all by land, of whom twenty-two were recaptured. The periods of unexpired imprisonment of escaped prisoners ranged from one to seven years.

Alarming as these figures look, it must be borne in mind that they represent but a small percentage of the aggregate number of attempts to escape, the majority of which end in failure

or disaster. In one of several interesting letters which I received on the subject from Sir Richard Temple, formerly Chief Commissioner of the Andamans, appeared the following pregnant words: "The attempts to escape from Port Blair were unending—ingenious, bold, plucky, and reckless beyond description; practically never successful, and on the very few occasions when they succeeded, the results of a reckless daring almost beyond the possibilities of human nature. The end of most attempts so far as known were tragical and pitiful in the extreme. What happened to those who died in the jungle, were drowned at sea, or were killed by the aborigines, one of course can never know—they were all terrible stories one may be sure." I subsequently had a long interview with Mr E. H. Man, who spent thirty odd years at the Andamans, at his private residence near Preston Park, when he kindly furnished me with the bulk of the information contained in this chapter.

There are two ways in which a convict may possibly escape from Port Blair, either by land or sea, both of which are fraught with many perils. The chances are overwhelmingly against success, for, in addition to the natural difficulties

attending such enterprises, every conceivable precaution against escapes is taken by the authorities. In order to prevent escapes by sea from Viper, a boat harbour has been formed at that Island, by means of a breakwater with a very narrow entrance, close to a brightly lighted sentry-box, and into this harbour all up-harbour boats have to be counted every evening. Every boat also has loose brass rowlocks, which have to be delivered up to the police sentry on duty at the entrance all the while a boat is lying in the harbour. But in spite of these precautions, as has been said, many escapes occur, a few of which prove successful. These are usually the result of great skill and subtlety coupled with unlimited daring.

One of the most desperate and successful escapes was that which was conceived and pioneered in December 1872 by a convict *jemadar* named Khuda Bakhsh, stationed at Nancowry. At the particular spot where this convict was lodged only two sea-going boats were available, and this circumstance the convict most cunningly turned to account. He reported that the boats were in bad condition, and obtained permission to repair them. The boats were accordingly "docked," and very soon one

of them was finished and in good condition, the other being still under repair. It was then that Khuda Bakhsh was missed. Upon examining his couch in the dormitory it was found that his domestic utensils and some of his bedding were gone, and it was then clear that he had escaped by sea, the bedding being used as a sail. It was also discovered that, not only had Khuda Bakhsh himself escaped, but he had taken eighteen others with him. They had all gone off in the boat which had just been repaired, and as the other boat was still under repair and unfit for use, there was no boat available in which to pursue the fugitives. The boat repairing was the initial move in this very subtle contrivance. Eventually, however, General Stewart went in pursuit in a gunboat, and a very exciting chase ensued. The convicts had, however, obtained a rather long start, and eventually succeeded in landing at Acheen. When this became known General Stewart made for that place, and at first the Sultan, a young man, refused to aid him in any way. General Stewart thereupon had a royal salute of guns fired, which stentorian indication of power and authority intimidated the young monarch into compliance.

Only six or seven of the convicts were, however, retaken, and these had been coerced into joining the enterprise by Khuda Bakhsh and others, under pain of violent reprisals. They surrendered willingly and gladly, and subsequently gave some interesting details of the escapade. Khuda Bakhsh joined the Achinese army and fought against the Dutch, against whom hostilities had lately commenced, and became a "general." Another went to Singapore, and thence to Mecca, being eventually recaptured in India, and sent back to the Andamans as a "lifer." During the night of their escape, reported those who were retaken, they suffered much anxiety during the hours of darkness. For security they refrained from showing any light, so that they were in constant danger of being run down by passing vessels, in addition to also being detected by those on board. They had, therefore, to maintain a most vigilant outlook, which put a great strain upon their nerves. Some of them at least were, however, rewarded for their boldness and intrepidity.

Upon another occasion a batch of convicts succeeded in getting away on a raft, braving all the perils of starvation and drowning. Having got well out to sea they were seen by the captain

of a passing vessel, to whom they represented themselves as wrecked mariners. The captain, under the circumstances, not unnaturally believed their story, and took them on board, subsequently landing them at Antwerp, where they were taken to the Asiatic Home. Later they were brought to England, taken about and shown the sights, including the Crystal Palace. Their pleasure peregrinations were reported in the newspapers, and our philanthropy and solicitous regard for the poor storm-tossed Eastern "Jackies" fulsomely approved of. These laudatory reports, however, happened to come under the notice of a certain medical man in London, who had spent some time at the Andamans, and knew a good deal about the convicts of that place. His suspicions were aroused, and, when subsequently he was confronted with the tourists, they were confirmed, and he knew them at once for escaped convicts. The authorities were thereupon very angry — the joke was too colossal for their capacity for humour. It was almost as good as the Kopenick incident.

A similar thing happened upon another occasion, the convicts being picked up at sea, taken to the Asiatic Home, and finally brought to London, where they were taken about, on

the Underground Railway, to stores, and so on. Their unconventional appearance in London aroused the hostile humour of the juvenile males, which found vent in throwing missiles at them, being one of those instincts implanted in English boys by civilisation and education which prompts them so to greet anything or anybody strange to them, and which they do not understand. It so chanced that a shipowner wanted stokers for a vessel lying at Greenock, and took into his service the "shipwrecked mariners" from the East. Thus the latter got back to India, where some were eventually taken.

In 1906 two convicts escaped from the forest camp between Goplakabang and Kalatang. One of them was discovered by a party of ex-convicts and free men working at a raft near Shoal Bay Creek. He had with him a store of water and some cooking utensils. He was captured. The other runaway was also captured, but not before he had obtained possession of the raft secured by those who had captured the first one. Some attempts to escape are of the most foolhardy description. For instance, one man put to sea on the trunk of a tree, paddling with his hands, and having nothing with him but a jar of water.

More terrible are the results of some of the

attempts to escape by land. Men sometimes starve to death in the jungle depths, or are visited with intolerable sufferings by the indigenous insects which lurk and abound within the jungle. In swampy places are leeches, and in dry places ticks. The latter are something like the jigger of Africa, although not quite so destructive. The jigger bores into your flesh and there deposits eggs, the progeny devouring the flesh. The tick, however, merely thrusts its head into the flesh, leaving the posterior portion protruding, and sucks the blood. If you attempt to pull it out it breaks off, leaving the head inside, which causes the flesh to fester. The way to deal with them is to drop a little methylated spirit on them, which gets into the wound and mixes with the blood, forming a very unpalatable drink to the insect. The latter will thereupon withdraw himself, and may be killed. Upon one occasion several convicts escaped into the jungle, and when eventually they were recaptured they were found to be almost blind with ticks, and presented a sorry appearance. This was considered to afford a very good object-lesson for the others, so the prisoners of their station were all paraded, and the hideous appearance and obvious sufferings

displayed to their united gaze. Mr Man told me that in consequence of his having upon one occasion tried to pull a tick from his arm, the latter was bad for six months.

In November 1905 seven convicts escaped from a road file at Tusonabad. These men had been selected among others for transfer to the Forest Department, and for collecting clay for brick-making operations. A rumour, however, was circulated among them that they were being sent to the firewood file at Bindraban, where there had recently been many punishments. Scarcely had the overseer who had taken down their names left them, than one of the men, an old convict, escaped. Later on the same day five new arrivals and an old, bad-charactered convict followed. Strong search parties were sent out, and all seven were recaptured three days later.

In December of the same year convict Jan, one of the ringleaders of the once notorious *Gumatti* gang of outlaws and ruffians, accompanied by two of his former associates in crime, escaped, the first from Phœnix Bay, and the two latter from Middle Point. Two days later Shinkai, a lieutenant of the ringleaders of the above gang, and a Peshawar convict, escaped from

Aberdeen. A wholesale pursuit was organised through a Mr Bonig, who, as in the case of the Patiala dacoits the previous year, did excellent work. Over one hundred Andamanese, in charge of convict *jemadar* Nga Ya Nyun, were despatched to search the jungle. They were at first supported by the police. On the 26th of the month Shinkai, who was armed with a *dah*, and his companion, armed with an axe, were, after some resistance, captured in the jungle near Ranguchang, on the east coast, by a party of Andamanese and police led by Nga Ya Nyun. Both runaways were wounded, but afterwards recovered. No trace of the other three men could be found till the 5th January, when their tracks were discovered on the west coast. On the 9th January the search party came across the men trying to float off a large raft which had grounded. Immediately the three runaways waded ashore, and Jan and one of his companions charged the Andamanese, who scattered. They were, however, rallied by Nga Ya Nyun, and shot Jan and his companion dead, as they refused to surrender, and were armed with *dahs* and a long knife. The remaining man thereupon gave himself up, and was taken unhurt.

In February 1906 a most daring escape was

effected from the cellular jail, by a prisoner named Atra, and a convict warder named Mit Singh. Atra, an exceedingly dangerous character, was also concerned in the organised escape made the previous year by the Patiala convicts. At about 1.45 A.M. on the 23rd February, Mit Singh informed another convict warder, whom he was to relieve at 2 A.M., that he was going to the latrine. As he did not return, search was made for him, but in vain. At 2 A.M. the convict warders, taking over charge of the block of cells in which Atra was confined, called out, as usual, to the prisoner, but obtained no answer. On the cell being opened, what had appeared to be the prisoner asleep was discovered to be a framework covered over with a blanket, to represent a man curled up. It now transpired that Atra had wrenched an iron bar from the window of his cell, and thus effecting an exit, he, by means of a blanket tied to one of the other bars of the window, reached the narrow ledge lower down, and then apparently slid down a water-pipe into the yard below. He then procured a tub from the latrine and, placing it on a turntable, scaled the jail wall. He was not recaptured till the 14th April. It appeared that he and his companion were all this time

in hiding in the neighbouring jungles. The convict warder who, Atra stated, had left him the day before to procure water-melons, was recaptured two days later at Namunaghar.

Such are some of the devices adopted, the skill employed, and the perils braved, by the Oriental criminal to gratify his desire for freedom.

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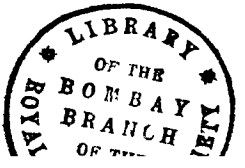

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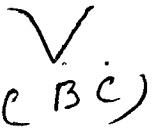

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